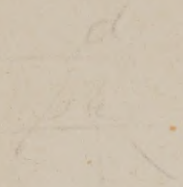
The Angler's Souvenir



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To all that love us,
and the honest art of Angling.

STUDY TO BE QUIET.



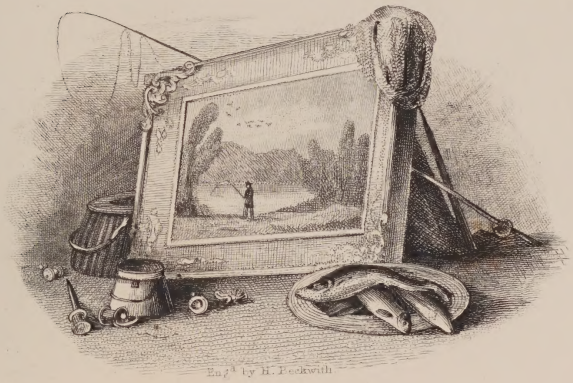
"As inward lore breeds outward talk,
The Hound some praise and some the Hawk;
Some better pleased with private sport,
Use Tennis some a Mistress court;
But these delights I neither wish
Nor envy while I freely fish."

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THE

ANGLER'S SOUVENIR,

by P. Fisher.



Engd by H. Beckwith

A NEW EDITION

Edited by G. Christopher Davies.

Author of "Angling Idylls."

with Illustrations by

Beckwith & Topham.

LONDON. FREDERICK WARNE & Co

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THE ANGLER'S SOUVENIR.

BY

P. FISHER.

EDITED BY

G. CHRISTOPHER DAVIES,

AUTHOR OF "THE SWAN AND HER CREW," "THE NORFOLK BROADS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY BECKWITH AND TOPHAM.

London and New York:
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.
1886.



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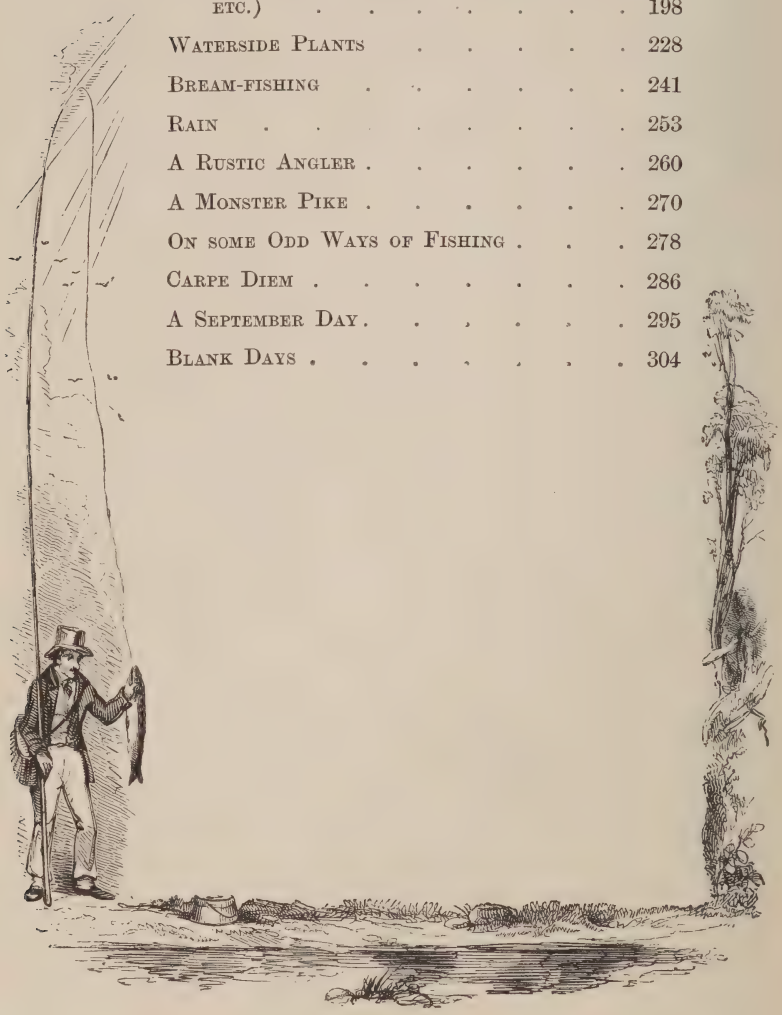
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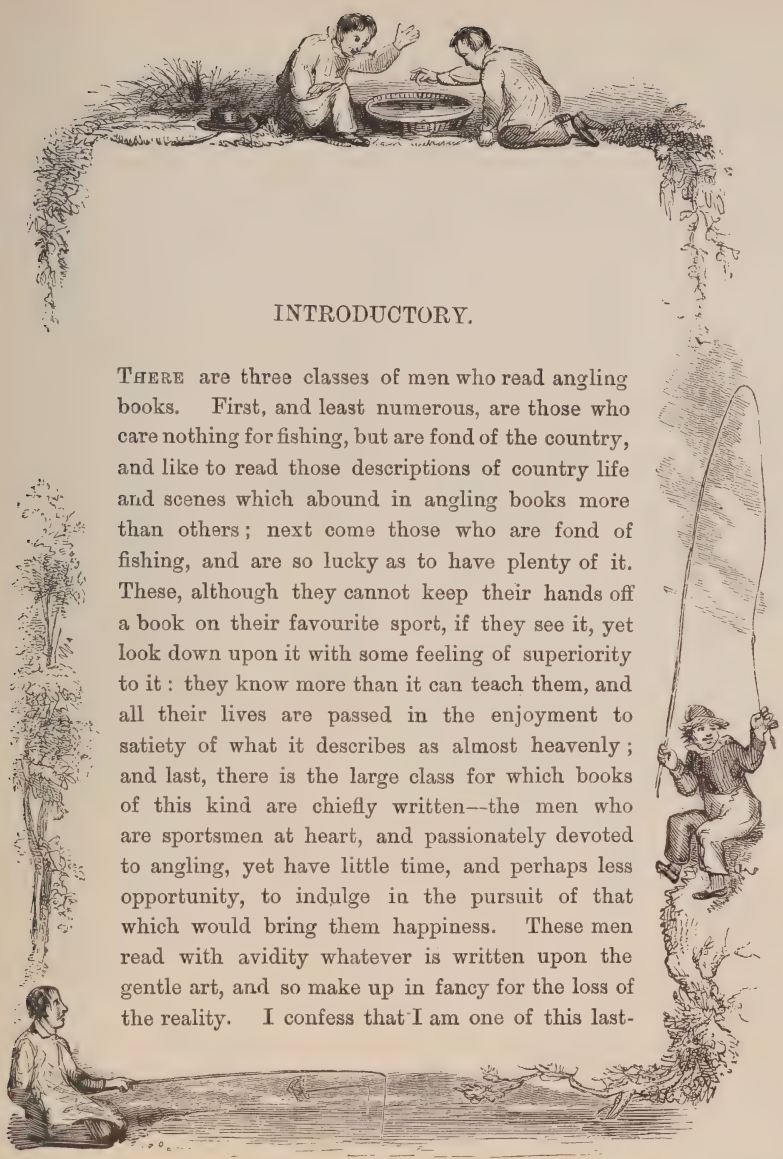
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INTRODUCTORY.

THERE are three classes of men who read angling books. First, and least numerous, are those who care nothing for fishing, but are fond of the country, and like to read those descriptions of country life and scenes which abound in angling books more than others; next come those who are fond of fishing, and are so lucky as to have plenty of it. These, although they cannot keep their hands off a book on their favourite sport, if they see it, yet look down upon it with some feeling of superiority to it: they know more than it can teach them, and all their lives are passed in the enjoyment to satiety of what it describes as almost heavenly; and last, there is the large class for which books of this kind are chiefly written—the men who are sportsmen at heart, and passionately devoted to angling, yet have little time, and perhaps less opportunity, to indulge in the pursuit of that which would bring them happiness. These men read with avidity whatever is written upon the gentle art, and so make up in fancy for the loss of the reality. I confess that I am one of this last-

named body. My opportunities for fishing are abundant enough, but, between law and literature, I haven't the time to avail myself of them. Therefore I read what others write, and I write myself for the sake of others. Yet, as I write of the days when I had the time and used it well, the longing to be off and away once more to river and lake comes with a painful force, and I strive to snatch an hour or two for its gratification. But a fisherman, if he is to be successful should be able to pick his days, and if he cannot do so, the chances are that the days on which he is compelled to fish, if he fishes at all, are unsuitable, and he is unsuccessful. At least that is my experience. Therefore I am again driven back to my books for consolation. Is this not the experience of many?

All this is meant to show that a demand has arisen and continues for angling-books, and that there is ample excuse for adding more to their already great number.

Some years ago there appeared an excellent book, with very beautiful steel engravings, called "The Angler's Souvenir," by "P. Fisher, Esq., assisted by several eminent piscatory characters." The earlier part of the present book consists of a portion of the original Angler's Souvenir. The practical matter of the Souvenir has been omitted, because the practice of angling has materially improved since it was written, and its instructions would be of no value to modern anglers. The descriptive part of it,

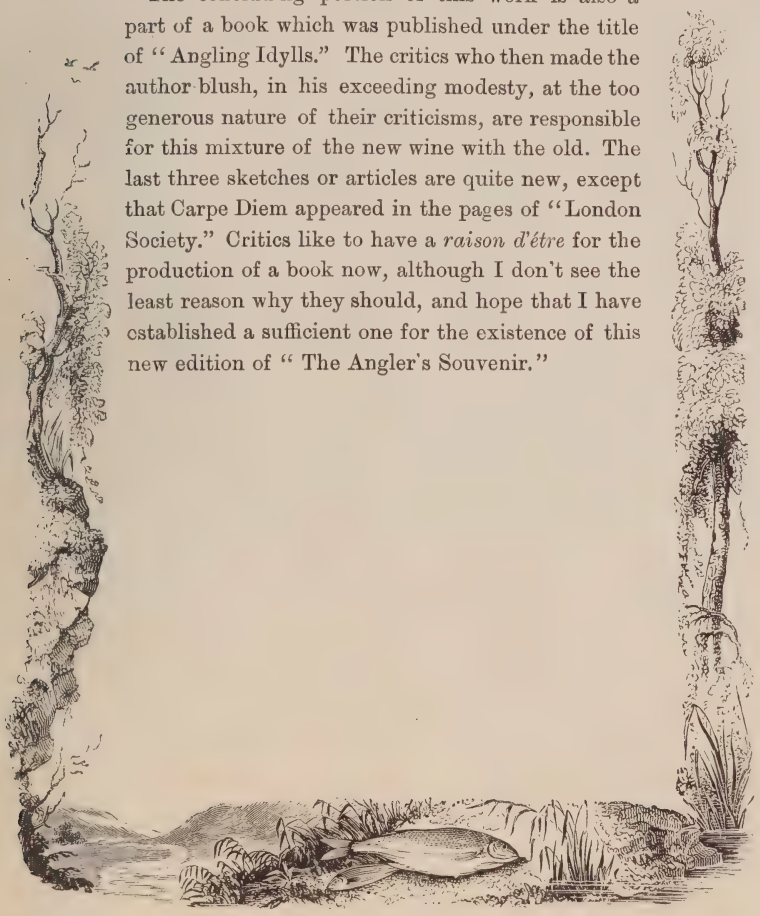






however, will not lose, but rather gain, by being old-fashioned, and should be received with the same favour by the present generation of anglers as by the past.

The concluding portion of this work is also a part of a book which was published under the title of "Angling Idylls." The critics who then made the author blush, in his exceeding modesty, at the too generous nature of their criticisms, are responsible for this mixture of the new wine with the old. The last three sketches or articles are quite new, except that Carpe Diem appeared in the pages of "London Society." Critics like to have a *raison d'être* for the production of a book now, although I don't see the least reason why they should, and hope that I have established a sufficient one for the existence of this new edition of "The Angler's Souvenir."







ANGLING, PRO AND CON.

I.

When fair Aurora rising early shewes
Her blushing face beyond the eastern hils,
And dyes the heavenly vault with purple rewes,
That far abroad the world with brightnesse fils ;
The meadows green are hoare with silver dewes,
That on the earth the sable night distils,
And chanting birds with merry notes bewray
The near approaching of the chearfull day.

Then let him go to river, brook, or lake,
That loves the sport, where store of fish abound,
And through the pleasant fields his journey make,
Amidst sweet pastures, meadows fresh and sound,
Where he may best his choice of pastime take,
While swift Hyperion runs his circle round ;
And, as the place shall to his liking prove,
There still remain, or further else remove.

The Secrets of Angling, by John Dennys, Esq. 1613.

THE true secret of the Angler's purest and most lasting pleasure—whose remembrance is sweet, and anticipation exhilarating,—is discovered in the stanzas which we have prefixed as a befitting introduction to the present chapter. The practice of Angling is closely and necessarily associated with objects, the contemplation, nay, the very beholding of which fails not to impart a pleasure to every man whose soul is not insensible to the charms presented by the natural combination of

"Field and forest, flood and hill,
Tower, abbey, church, and mill,"—

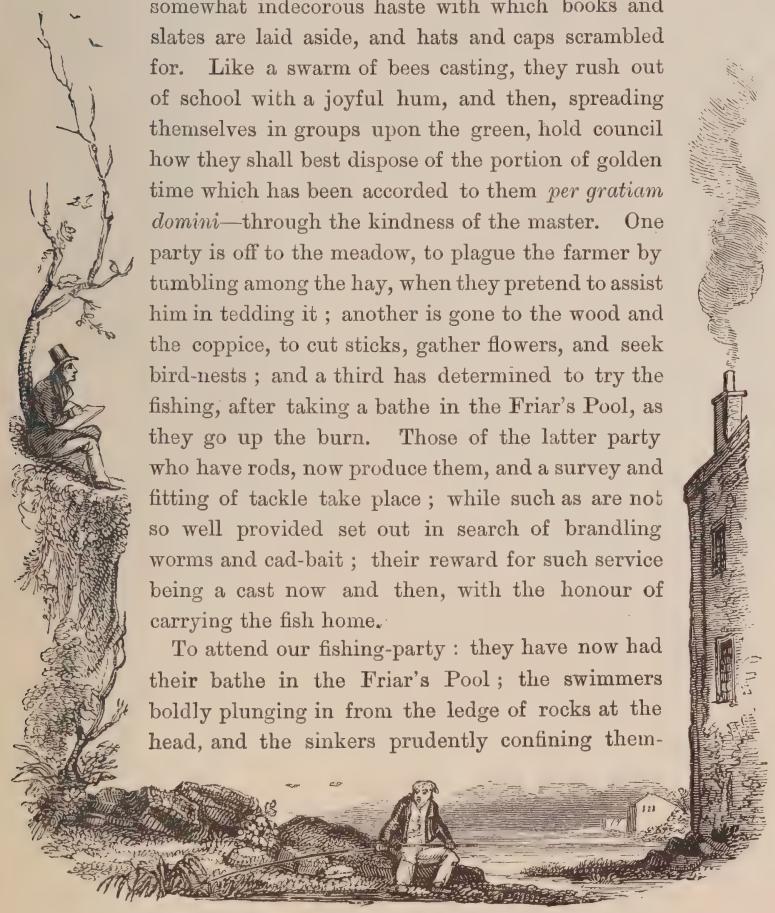
such as our friend here will enjoy after he has landed the salmon, which has held him in work for this last hour and a half.

Though the love of angling is generally acquired in youth, yet it sometimes attacks persons of more mature age; conveys a maggot into their head, and then they dream of gentles; tickles their nose with a May-fly, and straight they talk of palmers, red and black, dun-cuts, granams, coachmen, professors, gnats, moths, March browns, and peacock hackles; shows them a salmon in a fishmonger's shop, and then they think of landing an eighteen-pounder; makes them dream, speak, and think of nothing but angling; and

"winna let the puir bodies
Gang about their business!"

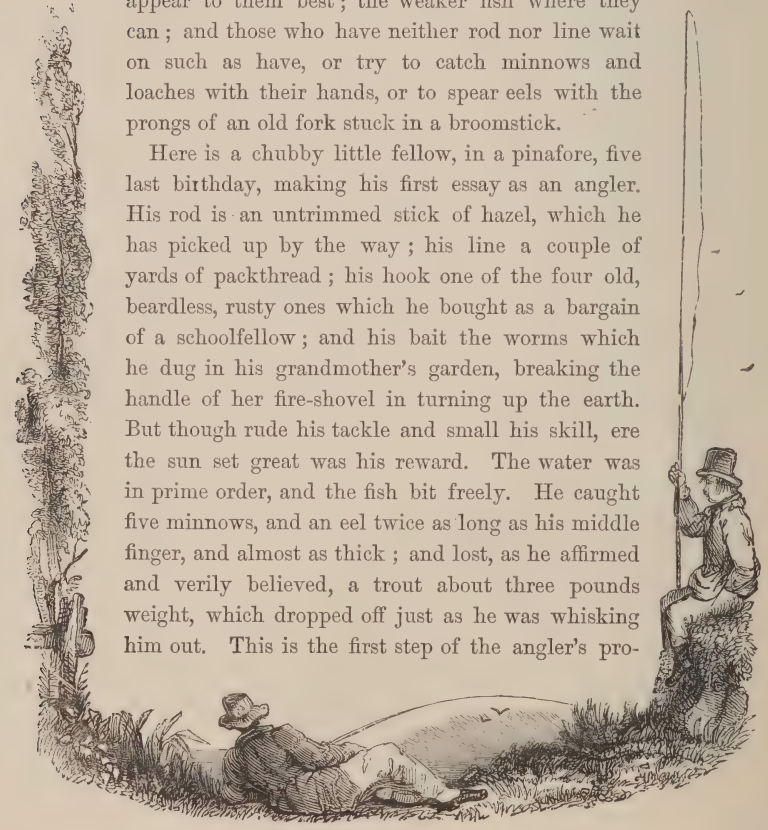
Few persons who have been educated in the country, except the peevish or sickly, and such as have had a brute for a master, can look back upon their boyish days without bringing to mind many recollections of real, heartfelt, unalloyed pleasure; amongst which that of angling, with an episode of bathing or bird-nesting, is not the least delightful. On a fine summer afternoon—when the new-mown hay smells sweet, when the trees are in full leaf, and wild-flowers in full bloom, the corn in the ear, and the bean in blossom; when there are trout in every burn, and nests in every hedge and thicket—happy are the schoolboys who obtain a half-holiday; and few of the pleasures of life, either for present enjoyment or after-thought, exceed those

of such an occasion. The kind master—masters who occasionally give such an indulgence are always kind, good men—with a suppressed smile of satisfaction announces the glad tidings, and immediately retires, that he may not witness the somewhat indecorous haste with which books and slates are laid aside, and hats and caps scrambled for. Like a swarm of bees casting, they rush out of school with a joyful hum, and then, spreading themselves in groups upon the green, hold council how they shall best dispose of the portion of golden time which has been accorded to them *per gratiam domini*—through the kindness of the master. One party is off to the meadow, to plague the farmer by tumbling among the hay, when they pretend to assist him in tedding it; another is gone to the wood and the coppice, to cut sticks, gather flowers, and seek bird-nests; and a third has determined to try the fishing, after taking a bathe in the Friar's Pool, as they go up the burn. Those of the latter party who have rods, now produce them, and a survey and fitting of tackle take place; while such as are not so well provided set out in search of brandling worms and cad-bait; their reward for such service being a cast now and then, with the honour of carrying the fish home.



To attend our fishing-party: they have now had their bathe in the Friar's Pool; the swimmers boldly plunging in from the ledge of rocks at the head, and the sinkers prudently confining them-

selves to dabbling about in the shallows at the foot. Two young ones, who would not go overhead voluntarily, were, to prevent them taking cold, thrice ducked *nolen volens;* and another, who would not bathe, was gently bumped against a soddyke. They now proceed to the serious business of the afternoon,—fishing. The strongest, as a matter of right, select such parts of the water as appear to them best; the weaker fish where they can; and those who have neither rod nor line wait on such as have, or try to catch minnows and loaches with their hands, or to spear eels with the prongs of an old fork stuck in a broomstick.



Here is a chubby little fellow, in a pinafore, five last birthday, making his first essay as an angler. His rod is an untrimmed stick of hazel, which he has picked up by the way; his line a couple of yards of packthread; his hook one of the four old, beardless, rusty ones which he bought as a bargain of a schoolfellow; and his bait the worms which he dug in his grandmother's garden, breaking the handle of her fire-shovel in turning up the earth. But though rude his tackle and small his skill, ere the sun set great was his reward. The water was in prime order, and the fish bit freely. He caught five minnows, and an eel twice as long as his middle finger, and almost as thick; and lost, as he affirmed and verily believed, a trout about three pounds weight, which dropped off just as he was whisking him out. This is the first step of the angler's pro-







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gress ; and from this day forward, when time and tide serve, will he fish by rapid stream and broad river, by highland loch and lowland mere ; until, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," he relapse into childhood again.

The boy who has thus auspiciously entered on his novitiate proceeds gradually until he takes a master's degree, an honour to which no one is admitted before he has performed the qualifying act of hooking and landing, without assistance, a salmon not less than fourteen pounds weight ; after which he ought, on producing his testimonium, to have the *entrée* of every angling club throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Should there be no salmon-fishing in the waters where he exercises his skill, then a jack of the same weight, also taken without assistance, or a stone and a half of trout, half a hundredweight of barbel, or a peck of dace, roach, or perch, caught in a day's fair fishing, not in dock or pond, may be allowed as a qualification, *speciali gratia*, for the same degree. It is here to be noted that bream may be allowed instead of barbel, or be weighed with them, if taken in the same day's fishing ; and that carp and tench may be weighed with trout. Eels are not reckoned ; and gudgeon-fishers are always to be considered in a state of pupilage, and their take not to be admitted in proof of angling skill, either by weight, tale, or measure. Gudgeon-fishing, as Michael Angelo said of oil-painting, is only fit for women



and boys. To take a salmon in fresco—that is, in a fresh or spate, as a north-country friend translates it—is the perfection of the angler's art.

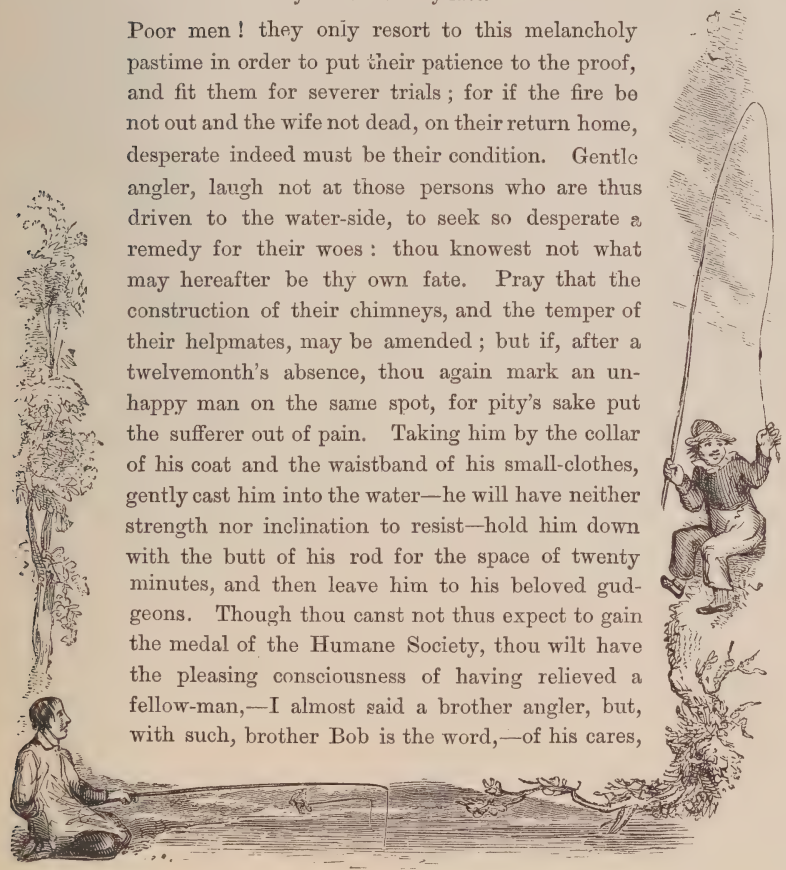
Though no person, however partial to angling, and however fond of walking, in pursuit of his sport, through pleasant meads and by rippling streams, can be entitled to the character of a skilful angler, unless he be capable of bringing home, by the fair exercise of his rod and line, a tolerable load of fish ; yet it by no means follows that mere fish-killers, whose practice had never extended beyond the Docks at Blackwall, the Surrey and Regent's Canals, or a mile from Islington, on the New River, are entitled to the name of anglers, in the best sense of the word. Their hands are dabbled in blood—from the butcher's tub—and fouled with the garbage with which they bait their ground; and there is the fragrance of no flowers to conceal the loathsome smell. They hear not the murmur of the stream, nor the song of birds ; they see not the forest in the fulness of summer leaf, nor the meadow pranked with summer flowers. Confined, in pairs, in a punt or boat, or singly to a strip of ground some thirty feet long, the extent of their rod and line, they sit or stand for hours, the picture of despondency—their eyes never raised frem their float, unless when roused by the coarse salute of a sailor or bargeman, or by the sarcastic query of "What success?" from the passer-by. Such persons, if married men, are generally those who seek



relief from domestic annoyances, and who in the words of one of their poets,

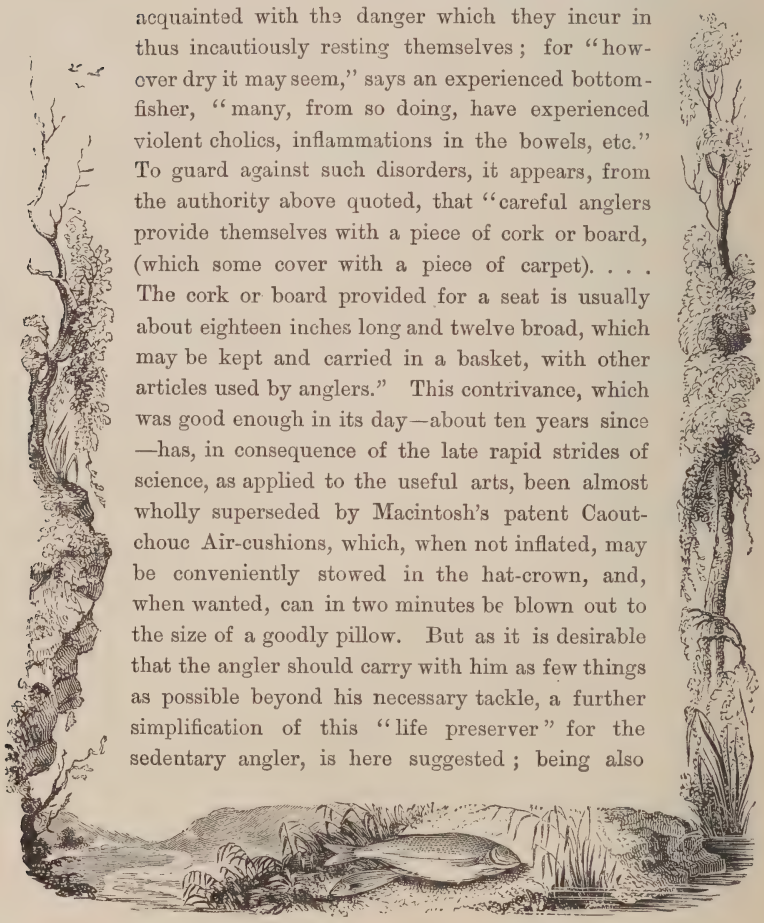
"bend their way
To streams, where far from care and strife,
From smoky house and scolding wife,
They snare the finny race."

Poor men! they only resort to this melancholy pastime in order to put their patience to the proof, and fit them for severer trials; for if the fire be not out and the wife not dead, on their return home, desperate indeed must be their condition. Gentle angler, laugh not at those persons who are thus driven to the water-side, to seek so desperate a remedy for their woes: thou knowest not what may hereafter be thy own fate. Pray that the construction of their chimneys, and the temper of their helpmates, may be amended; but if, after a twelvemonth's absence, thou again mark an unhappy man on the same spot, for pity's sake put the sufferer out of pain. Taking him by the collar of his coat and the waistband of his small-clothes, gently cast him into the water—he will have neither strength nor inclination to resist—hold him down with the butt of his rod for the space of twenty minutes, and then leave him to his beloved gudgeons. Though thou canst not thus expect to gain the medal of the Humane Society, thou wilt have the pleasing consciousness of having relieved a fellow-man,—I almost said a brother angler, but, with such, brother Bob is the word,—of his cares,



and of having prevented him from committing suicide.

Elderly anglers, who feel weak in the legs after a mile or two's walk, and who seat themselves on the bare ground when fishing, ought to be made acquainted with the danger which they incur in thus incautiously resting themselves; for "however dry it may seem," says an experienced bottom-fisher, "many, from so doing, have experienced violent cholics, inflammations in the bowels, etc." To guard against such disorders, it appears, from the authority above quoted, that "careful anglers provide themselves with a piece of cork or board, (which some cover with a piece of carpet). . . . The cork or board provided for a seat is usually about eighteen inches long and twelve broad, which may be kept and carried in a basket, with other articles used by anglers." This contrivance, which was good enough in its day—about ten years since—has, in consequence of the late rapid strides of science, as applied to the useful arts, been almost wholly superseded by Macintosh's patent Caoutchouc Air-cushions, which, when not inflated, may be conveniently stowed in the hat-crown, and, when wanted, can in two minutes be blown out to the size of a goodly pillow. But as it is desirable that the angler should carry with him as few things as possible beyond his necessary tackle, a further simplification of this "life preserver" for the sedentary angler, is here suggested; being also







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waterproof, it has all the general advantages of the cushion, with, it is presumed, some little comforts in addition :—to be warm as well as dry, in the part most exposed to cold and damp, is a great desideratum with the angler who wishes to enjoy

"pleasure and ease
Together mixed,—sweet recreation."

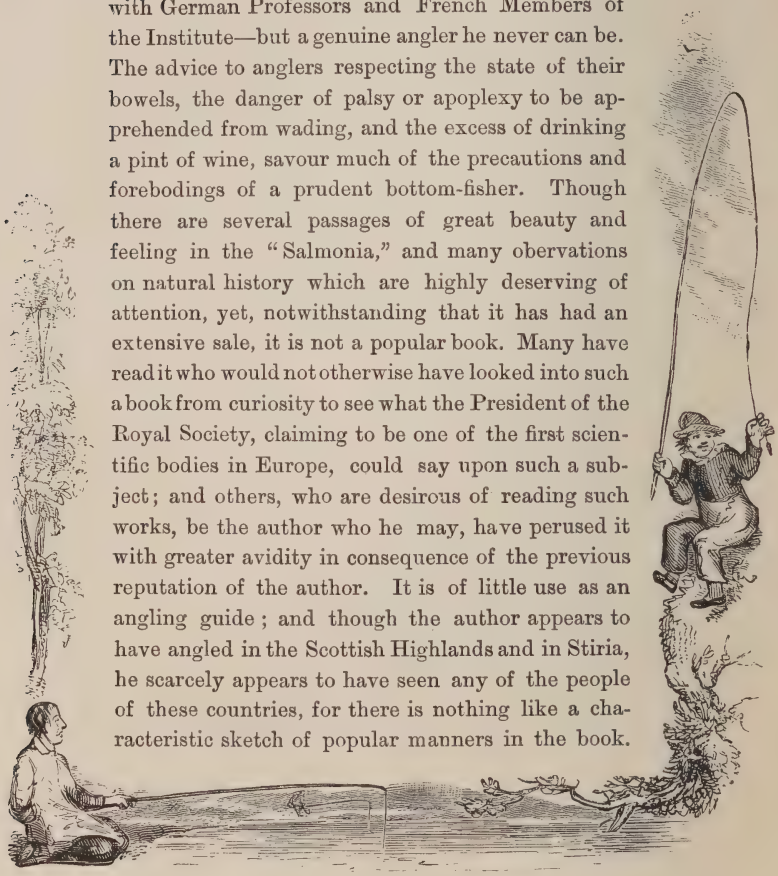
The proposed improvement has also the advantage over the cushion in these points,—it is always ready for use, and is much less liable to be lost. It is rather surprising that an invention at once so simple and obvious should have occurred to no bottom-fisher before. It consists merely in seating the inexpressibles of the sedentary angler with caoutchouc, and lining them, according to size, with two, three, or four bosom friends—prepared rabbit-skins, so called,—which can be obtained at any glover or hosier's shop.

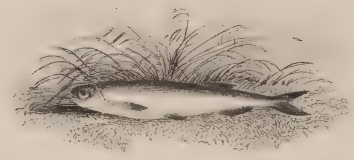
Though Sir Humphrey Davy, in his "Salmonia," speaks lightly of the angling of "cockney fishermen, who fish for roach and dace in the Thames," yet we strongly suspect that in this school he was first initiated into the mysteries of the rod and line, and that his love of fly-fishing for trout and salmon was rather a late one. He was President of the Royal Society, and he was ambitious—*sero sed serio*, late though earnestly—of ranking among the first of fly-fishers. Vain hope! No man who drives out to Denham, "in a light carriage and pair of horses," to enjoy trout-fishing in a preserved stream;

or who is carried into a boat on a Highlandman's back, to fish for salmon on Loch Maree, need aspire to such a distinction. Of fly-fishing, he may talk, in season and out of season,

"About it, Goddess, and about it,"

with German Professors and French Members of the Institute—but a genuine angler he never can be. The advice to anglers respecting the state of their bowels, the danger of palsy or apoplexy to be apprehended from wading, and the excess of drinking a pint of wine, savour much of the precautions and forebodings of a prudent bottom-fisher. Though there are several passages of great beauty and feeling in the "Salmonia," and many obervations on natural history which are highly deserving of attention, yet, notwithstanding that it has had an extensive sale, it is not a popular book. Many have read it who would not otherwise have looked into such a book from curiosity to see what the President of the Royal Society, claiming to be one of the first scientific bodies in Europe, could say upon such a subject; and others, who are desirous of reading such works, be the author who he may, have perused it with greater avidity in consequence of the previous reputation of the author. It is of little use as an angling guide; and though the author appears to have angled in the Scottish Highlands and in Stiria, he scarcely appears to have seen any of the people of these countries, for there is nothing like a characteristic sketch of popular manners in the book.





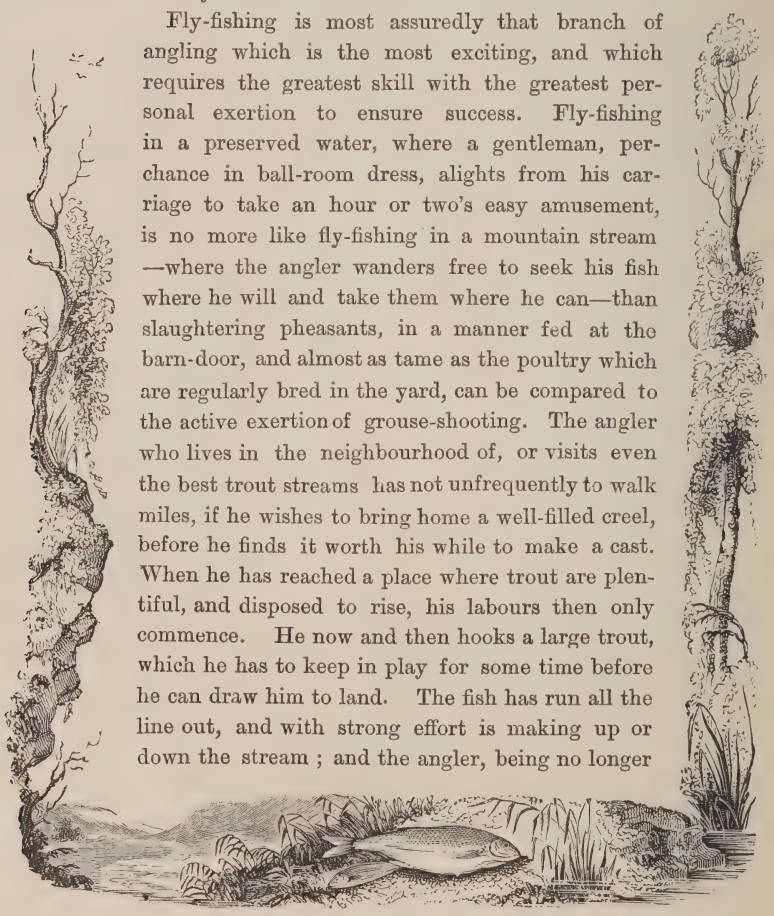


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The notice of the "stout Highlander with a powerful tail, or, as we should call it in England, suite," is a poor affair; and Mr. Ornither was right in not saying a word about the Celt being "a pot-fisher, and somewhat hungry," until his tail was turned, lest he should have soused him in the pool. The sneer from the Cockney (he could be nothing else), one of a party who "have come nearly a thousand miles for this amusement," at a Highlandman as a pot-fisher, is really capital. Why, what does the Highlandman feed on?—Salmon, grouse, and red deer; and he might as well be laughed at as a pantry sportsman, because he kills the latter for his table, as sneered at because he takes his own fish. We have known some trout and salmon fishers in our day, and the best of them were pot-fishers; not men who fished for a living, but who walked far and waded deep to bring home a prime salmon for the kettle, or a creel full of trout for the frying-pan. The author of "Salmonia," who is not disinclined to let us know that he enjoyed the acquaintance of a Prince of the Blood Royal, and had lived with the great—*cum magnis vixisse* would form no unapt motto for the book—is more at home at Denham, within the sound of "the dressing-bell which rings at half-past four," preparatory to dinner at five, than on the banks of a Highland loch, where the select party is annoyed by the sight of a powerful Highlandman with his tail on. Mountain lochs and streams cannot be so strictly preserved as two

or three miles of stream in Buckinghamshire ; nor gentlemen anglers in Ross-shire so well fenced in from chance intruders as by the side of a brook which skirts a gentleman's pleasure-grounds within twenty miles of London.

Fly-fishing is most assuredly that branch of angling which is the most exciting, and which requires the greatest skill with the greatest personal exertion to ensure success. Fly-fishing in a preserved water, where a gentleman, perchance in ball-room dress, alights from his carriage to take an hour or two's easy amusement, is no more like fly-fishing in a mountain stream —where the angler wanders free to seek his fish where he will and take them where he can—than slaughtering pheasants, in a manner fed at the barn-door, and almost as tame as the poultry which are regularly bred in the yard, can be compared to the active exertion of grouse-shooting. The angler who lives in the neighbourhood of, or visits even the best trout streams has not unfrequently to walk miles, if he wishes to bring home a well-filled creel, before he finds it worth his while to make a cast. When he has reached a place where trout are plentiful, and disposed to rise, his labours then only commence. He now and then hooks a large trout, which he has to keep in play for some time before he can draw him to land. The fish has run all the line out, and with strong effort is making up or down the stream ; and the angler, being no longer







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able to follow him on the shore—for a tree, a rock, or a row of alders prevents him,—and knowing that his tackle, which towards the hook is of the finest gut, will not hold the trout, and rather than lose the speckled beauty, three pounds weight at the least, into the water he goes, up to his knees, and possibly a yard above, the first step. And thus he continues leading a sort of amphibious life, now on land, now in the water, for nearly half a day, till he has killed his creel-full, about the size of a fish-woman's pannier, with some three or four dozen besides, strung on his garters and suspended over his rod. In this guise, light-hearted—for he has reason to be proud of his success—though heavily laden, he takes his way homeward; and then does he, for the first time, note how rapidly the hours have fled. He came out about two in the afternoon, just thinking to try if the trout would rise, as there had been a shower in the morning and the water was a little coloured; and he now perceives that the sun, which is shedding a flood of glory through the rosy clouds that for half an hour before partly obscured his rays, will in ten minutes sink behind the western hill, although it be the 21st of June. Involuntarily he stands for a while to gaze upon the scene. Everything around him in the solitude of the hills—for there is no human dwelling within five miles—appears quiet and composed, but not sad. The face of nature appears with a chastened loveliness, induced by the

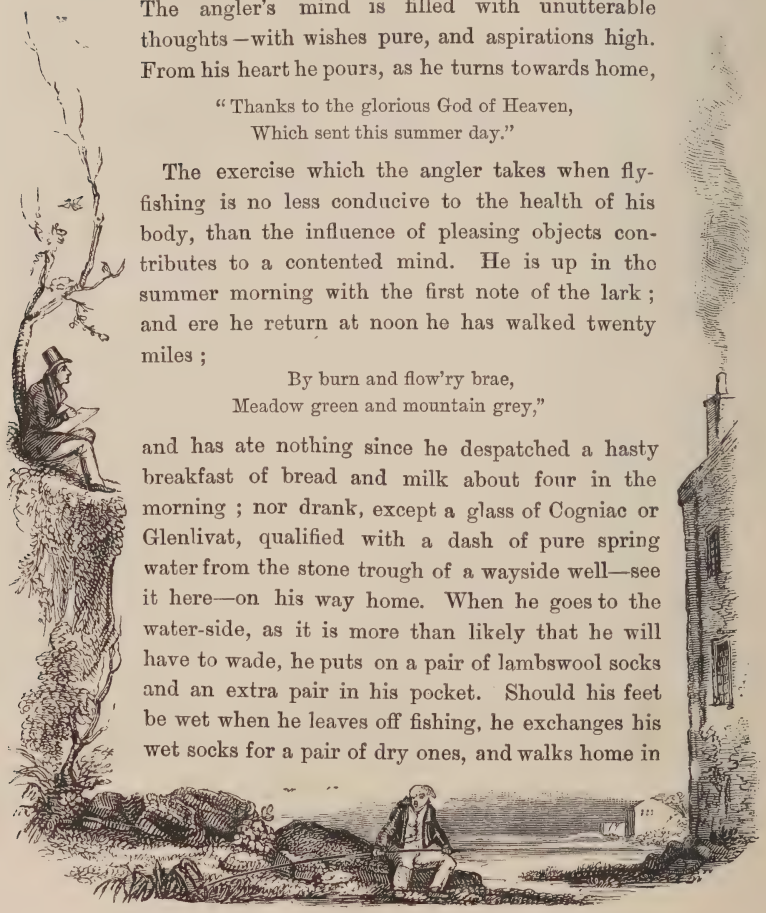
departing day; the winds are sleeping, and so are the birds—lark and linnet, blackbird and thrush: the leaves of the aspen are seen to move, but not heard to rustle: the bubbling of the stream, as it hurries on over rocks and pebbles, is only heard. The angler's mind is filled with unutterable thoughts—with wishes pure, and aspirations high. From his heart he pours, as he turns towards home,

"Thanks to the glorious God of Heaven,
Which sent this summer day."

The exercise which the angler takes when fly-fishing is no less conducive to the health of his body, than the influence of pleasing objects contributes to a contented mind. He is up in the summer morning with the first note of the lark; and ere he return at noon he has walked twenty miles;

By burn and flow'ry brae,
Meadow green and mountain grey,"

and has ate nothing since he despatched a hasty breakfast of bread and milk about four in the morning; nor drank, except a glass of Cogniac or Glenlivat, qualified with a dash of pure spring water from the stone trough of a wayside well—see it here—on his way home. When he goes to the water-side, as it is more than likely that he will have to wade, he puts on a pair of lambswool socks and an extra pair in his pocket. Should his feet be wet when he leaves off fishing, he exchanges his wet socks for a pair of dry ones, and walks home in

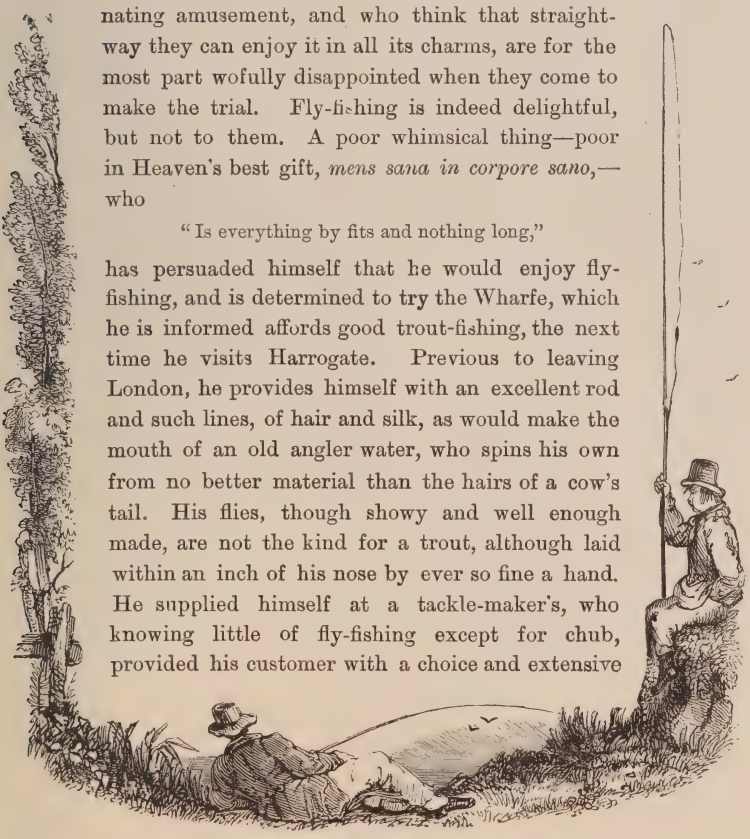


a state of exceeding great comfort; the glass which he took at the well, just after changing his socks, having sent the blood tingling to his toe-ends.

Delicate, nervous people—such fragile beings as, in country phrase, are said to be "all egg-shells"—who conceive, and very truly, from some delightful papers in *Blackwood*, by the "old man eloquent," that fly-fishing must be a most fascinating amusement, and who think that straightway they can enjoy it in all its charms, are for the most part wofully disappointed when they come to make the trial. Fly-fishing is indeed delightful, but not to them. A poor whimsical thing—poor in Heaven's best gift, *mens sana in corpore sano*,—who

"Is everything by fits and nothing long,"

has persuaded himself that he would enjoy fly-fishing, and is determined to try the Wharfe, which he is informed affords good trout-fishing, the next time he visits Harrogate. Previous to leaving London, he provides himself with an excellent rod and such lines, of hair and silk, as would make the mouth of an old angler water, who spins his own from no better material than the hairs of a cow's tail. His flies, though showy and well enough made, are not the kind for a trout, although laid within an inch of his nose by ever so fine a hand. He supplied himself at a tackle-maker's, who knowing little of fly-fishing except for chub, provided his customer with a choice and extensive



assortment of moths, cockchafers, and bees, with various kinds of large flies, dressed on hooks large enough to hold any salmon in Tweed.

Having thus supplied himself with the means and qualified himself in the art of killing by a diligent study of Walton, Venables, Barker, Bowlker, Williamson, Mackintosh, Bainbridge, Carrol, and others, who have treated of fly-fishing, he arrives at Harrogate about the middle of August, and in the course of a day or two proceeds to the Wharfe, in the neighbourhood of Harewood, to make his first essay. Not wishing to appear as a novice, and thinking that his knowledge of the science may fairly place him on a par with any mere practical country fly-fisher, who has never read a book on the subject in his life, he asks no one's advice, but in the fulness of his own wisdom sets about putting his theory into practice—sometimes a rather difficult affair as well in fly-fishing as in ploughing by steam. Having reached the water, which happens to be small and fine, about ten in the morning, the sun shining bright and the sky clear, he very properly begins by adjusting his tackle. He puts his rod together, screws on his wheel, on which he winds the line in a very artist-like manner, leading the end of it through the rings on the rod. He now draws forth his book of flies, and after selecting a foot-length to which three likely flies are attached—to wit, for the stretcher a good, heavy, red-ended bee to make the line carry



well out; for the lower dropper a cockchafer, and for the upper, a very fine grey moth—he loops it to his line. Being resolved not to attempt throwing far at first, he only lets about nine yards of line off, and waving his rod with a graceful turn of the arm, he meditates a throw; and now, away the line goes!—No, not exactly yet; for the bee has been so well counterfeited that it appears to have been attracted by the flower of the thistle to whose stalk it is sticking so fast. The bee is now disengaged from the thistle, but the moth shows a partiality for broadcloth, and adheres most pertinaciously to the collar of the gentleman's coat, which he is obliged to put off before he can free himself from the annoying insect. But he has profited already from experience, and discovered that the surest mode of throwing out the line straight before you is first to lay it on the ground straight behind, and then, taking your rod in both hands, and holding it directly over your right shoulder, deliver the flies right in front by a sort of overhead stroke. After this fashion does he make his first cast, and swash go the flies into the water as if a trio of wild ducks had stooped there in full flight; and had there been a trout near, he most surely would have been killed—with fright. For an hour he continues his unsuccessful practice; but consoles himself with the thought that he will have the more to take next day. Next day comes, another after that, but still he

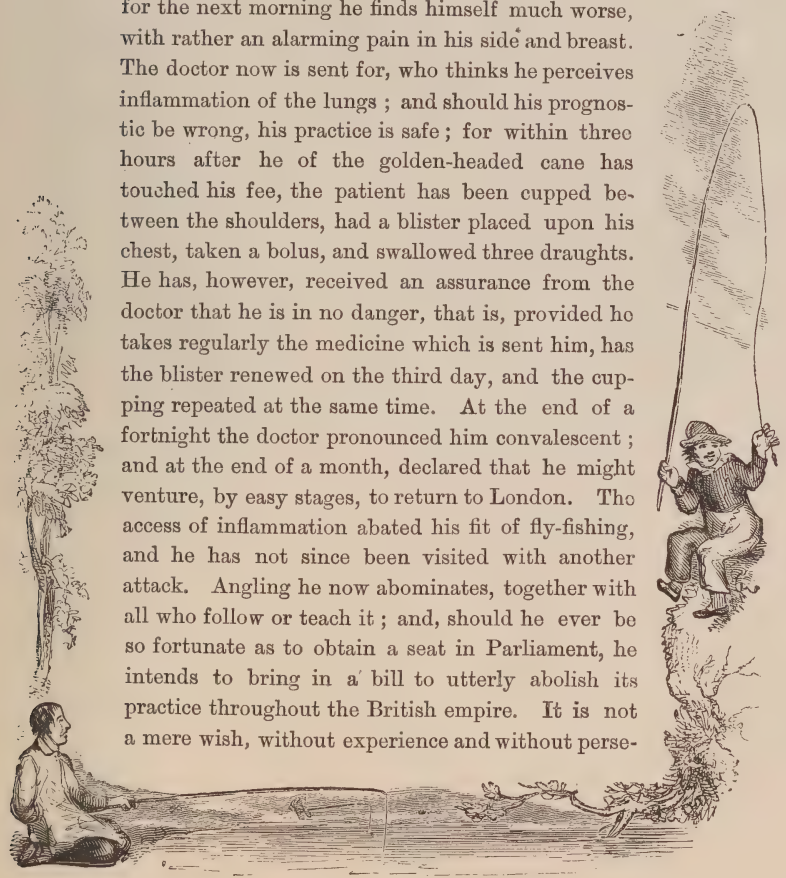




has caught no trout, though he has lost many flies. On the fourth day it rains, and in the forlorn hope of filling his basket while the water is rising, he ventures, without umbrella, to brave a shower—but still without success; he catches nothing but a cold. The same night he has his feet put in warm water, and takes a basin of gruel when he goes to bed. How unlike the angler proper, who has the same day been fishing in the Tweed, between Yair-bridge and Melrose. He has caught four grilses, and as many dozen of trouts, from three in the afternoon till seven; and about eight o'clock, to save time and trouble, takes both dinner and supper at once; and afterwards enjoys, with Capt. Clutter-buck, a bottle of wine, drinks three tumblers of toddy, smokes two cigars, and retires to bed about eleven, to rise, like a giant refreshed, at six the next morning.

But to attend to the progress of our amateur angler's disorder.—The next morning he finds that the cold which he has caught when trying for trout is not disposed to leave him; so he takes his coffee and reads the newspaper in bed. He gets up about two in the afternoon, rather hoarse, with a slight tickling cough, but dares not stir out, as a drizzling rain is falling. Towards evening he becomes fidgety, and wants something to read; and looking into his trunk for a book, lays his hands on Walton, which, in savage mood, he throws to the other side of the room, wishing the good old man, and all

writers on angling—whom he considers as the authors of his disorder, by tempting him to try fly-fishing—at a place where it is to be hoped no honest angler ever will be found. At night his gruel is repeated, but without any beneficial effect; for the next morning he finds himself much worse, with rather an alarming pain in his side and breast. The doctor now is sent for, who thinks he perceives inflammation of the lungs; and should his prognostic be wrong, his practice is safe; for within three hours after he of the golden-headed cane has touched his fee, the patient has been cupped between the shoulders, had a blister placed upon his chest, taken a bolus, and swallowed three draughts. He has, however, received an assurance from the doctor that he is in no danger, that is, provided he takes regularly the medicine which is sent him, has the blister renewed on the third day, and the cupping repeated at the same time. At the end of a fortnight the doctor pronounced him convalescent; and at the end of a month, declared that he might venture, by easy stages, to return to London. The access of inflammation abated his fit of fly-fishing, and he has not since been visited with another attack. Angling he now abominates, together with all who follow or teach it; and, should he ever be so fortunate as to obtain a seat in Parliament, he intends to bring in a bill to utterly abolish its practice throughout the British empire. It is not a mere wish, without experience and without perse-



verance, that will convert a person who has scarcely seen a trout-stream in his life into an expert fly-fisher. For the perfect enjoyment of angling, there is still something required besides dexterity in the management of the rod, skill in the choice of flies, and acquaintance with the haunts of fish, and the localities of the stream. In addition to these, there must be a warm yet enduring love of angling, even though the diligent pursuit of it be occasionally attended with no reward. The mind of the angler should be fully sensible of the beauties of the scenery which are presented to him in his excursions by lake and stream; and susceptible of the heart-healing impressions which the splendour of the rising or setting sun, the rugged grandeur of rocks and craggy mountains, the milder charms of corn-fields, meadows, and woody slopes, never fail to convey to him whose better feelings are not overlaid by the filthy lucre of Mammon, nor corrupted by the principles of the modern school of heartless, counterfeit philosophy, which assumes to itself, *par excellence*, the title of "Utilitarian," and has discarded the old-fashioned virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

"For what availes to Brooke or lake to goe,
With handsome rods and hookes of every sort,
Well-twisted lines, and many trinckets moe,
To find the fish within their wat'ry fort,
If that the minds be not contented so,
But wants those gifts which should the rest support."





II.

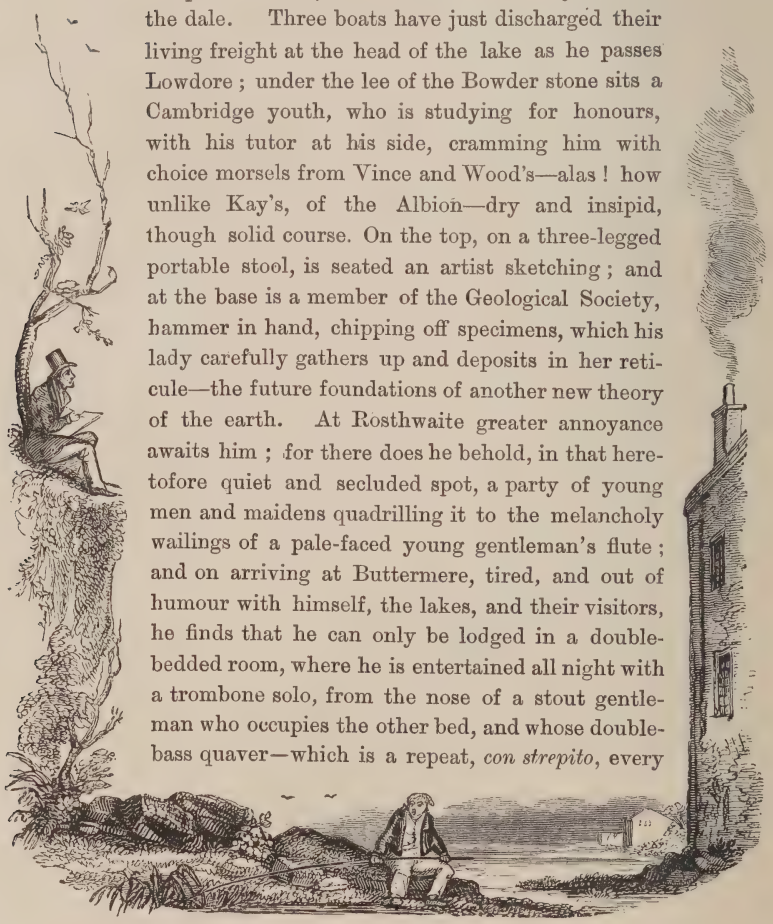
The author of "Salmonia," some six or seven years ago, declared that the glory of fly-fishing had departed from many of the streams of Scotland; but Christopher North, a much higher authority, writing within this present year, gives to all anglers a comfortable assurance that, though there is what he, "Christopher, and a Scotchman," calls first-rate angling, "in few, if any, of the dear English lakes;" and though, with your own tackle, you may angle in Crummock-water, "with amorous ditties all a summer's day," and never get a rise; 'tis never so in the lochs of Scotland. "But all living creatures," he thus continues, "are in a constant state of hunger in this favoured country; so bait your hook with anything edible—it matters not what—snail, spider, fly—and angle for what you may, you are sure to catch it—almost as certainly as the accent or the itch." In addition to this express testimony of one so well qualified to give an opinion on this subject, we shall just quote an account of the Ettrick Shepherd's success, in little more than a mere *en-passant* "whup" at a couple of streams, the Meggat and the Fruid, when journeying, on a pleasant April day, from his own

home on Yarrow to visit a few friends who had pitched their tent, on a gipsying excursion, in the Fairy's Cleugh, on the south-eastern borders of Lanarkshire. We shall not attempt to injure, by translating, the Shepherd's delightful Doric, but quote his own words. "I couldna ken how ye micht be fennin' in the Tent for fish, so I thocht I might as weel tak a whup at the Meggat. How they lap! I filled ma creel afore the dew-melt; and as it's out o' the poor o' ony man wi' a heart to gie owre fishin' in the Meggat durin' a tak, I kent by the sun it was nine-hours; and by that time I had filled a' ma pouches, the braid o' the tail o' some o' them wrappin' again ma elbows." Having overridden his horse, to make up for lost time, the poet is obliged to wait till he gets second wind; and not to be idle, in the meantime, he tries another stream. "I just thocht I wad try the Fruid wi' the flee, and put en a professor. The Fruid's fu' o' sma' troots, and I sune had a string. I could na hae had about me, at this time, ae way and ither, in ma several repositories, string and a', less than thretty dizzen o' troots." Now this is angling indeed, and enough to tempt an elderly Benedict, who manages to kill two brace and a half in a week's constant angling in the Colne, to desert house and home for a month's angling in the Meggat and the Fruid.

The effect produced on the mind of the angling public by such papers, in *Blackwood*, as "Christopher at the Lakes," "Christopher in his Sporting

Jacket, Loch Awe," and many others, imbued with a similar spirit, and bearing the impress of the same master hand, is extremely questionable, so far as the general interests of society are regarded. They have unsettled the minds of many. By a kind of fascination, they have allured the elderly gentleman whose annual summer trip never extended beyond Margate, to venture on a long journey to attend the Windermere Regatta, trace the course of the Duddon, or ascend Skiddaw, instead of viewing Doggett's coat and badge rowed for on the Thames, wandering by the Regent's Canal, or climbing Primrose Hill, to see Mr. Sadler's balloon go up; and even lawyers may now be seen, during the long vacation, angling for trout on Loch Awe, who formerly confined themselves to trolling for pike—fresh-water attorneys—in the river Lea. From Midsummer to Michaelmas the lakes are perfectly swarming with visitors, while trout have, in the same ratio, become scarce; and beds are scarcely to be had for love or money. It is in vain that the "contemplative man" endeavours to enjoy his meditations alone. If he ascend Skiddaw, he overtakes and passes a slow-paced, short-winded company toiling up the steep; he meets a second coming down, who have a match against time, and intend completing a tour of the lakes in four days; and the first sight that greets him when he reaches the top is a family party of thirteen, engaged in eating a family dinner—legs of mutton and trim-

mings—which boots and the hostler have carried up in a clothes-basket. Thinking to find something like solitude in the desert, he takes the lonely road to Buttermere up Borrowdale ; but still he cannot escape the lakers, who cross him at every turn of the dale. Three boats have just discharged their living freight at the head of the lake as he passes Lowdore ; under the lee of the Bowder stone sits a Cambridge youth, who is studying for honours, with his tutor at his side, cramming him with choice morsels from Vince and Wood's—alas ! how unlike Kay's, of the Albion—dry and insipid, though solid course. On the top, on a three-legged portable stool, is seated an artist sketching ; and at the base is a member of the Geological Society, hammer in hand, chipping off specimens, which his lady carefully gathers up and deposits in her reticule—the future foundations of another new theory of the earth. At Rosthwaite greater annoyance awaits him ; for there does he behold, in that heretofore quiet and secluded spot, a party of young men and maidens quadrilling it to the melancholy wailings of a pale-faced young gentleman's flute ; and on arriving at Buttermere, tired, and out of humour with himself, the lakes, and their visitors, he finds that he can only be lodged in a double-bedded room, where he is entertained all night with a trombone solo, from the nose of a stout gentleman who occupies the other bed, and whose double-bass quaver—which is a repeat, *con strepito*, every



half-hour—he vainly hopes is the effect of strangulation. Finding no delightful solitude out of doors, nor rest in his bed, he returns to town by the 1st of September ; and finds, in the deserted walks and drives of Hyde Park, that freedom from intrusion which he in vain sought among the hills.

The evil of those papers is not confined to tempting sober, quiet people, who,

"Along the cool sequestered vale of life
Have kept the noiseless tenor of their way,"

—have walked in cork soles by the shady side of the Strand or Fleet Street all their lives—to set out on a wild-goose chase after the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful, among hills and lakes, and then leaving them, as a Will o' the Wisp does his followers, beguiled and laughed at. It extends to others, recalling scenes which they can never again visit, and exciting longings which can never be gratified. The native of Cumberland or Westmoreland, the man of pleasant Teviotdale, or the child of the mist from the Highlands,

"Absent long and distant far,"

from the hills and streams which in boyhood he loved, who has been immured for years in a Babel of brick and mortar, is seized, on reading those papers, with a species of calenture. Recollections of the happy days of his boyhood come over his mind as he reads the page where, in

'. . . . words that breathe,"

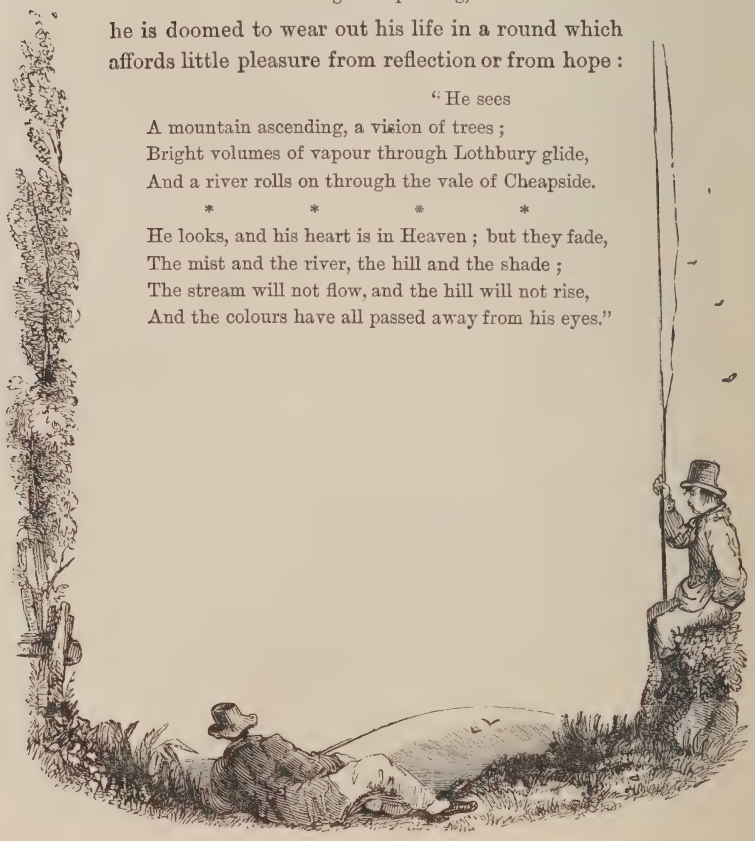


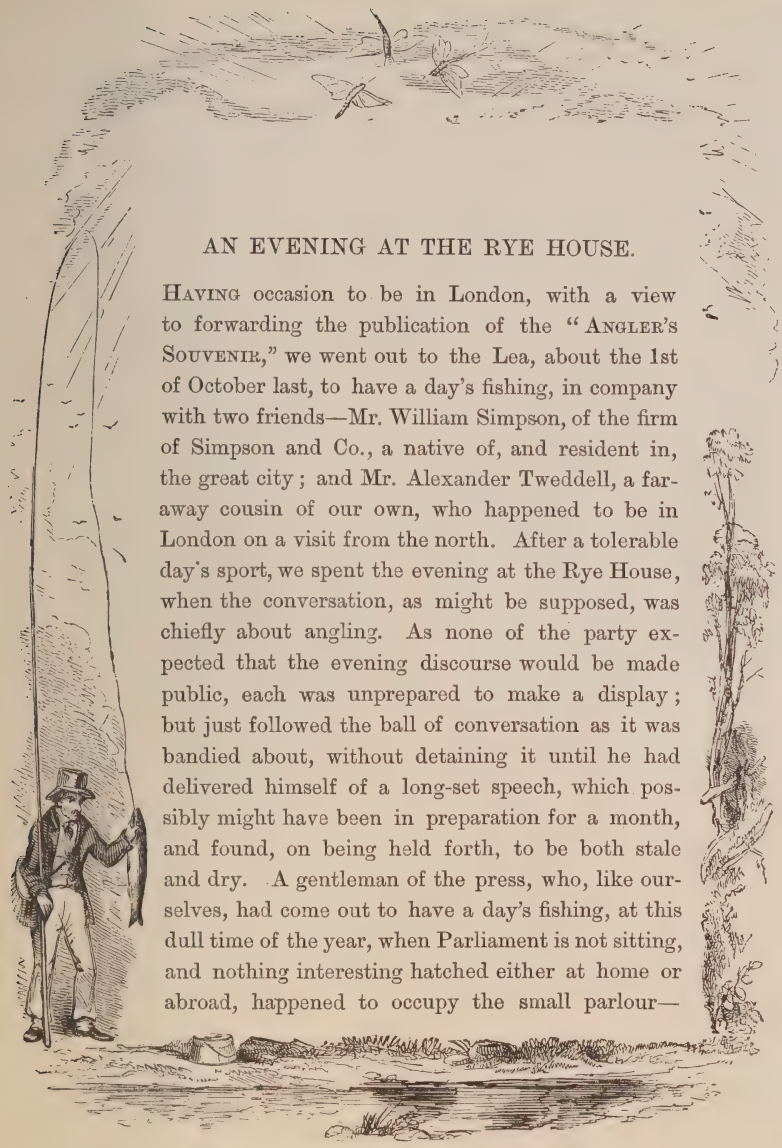
the faithful picture is portrayed. The memory of dear, departed days is recalled, and a full tide of pleasure bursts upon his heart, to be succeeded, when the enchanting vision has passed, by a corresponding depression, when he reflects how small is the chance of his ever visiting his native place again; but that,

"Getting and spending,"

he is doomed to wear out his life in a round which affords little pleasure from reflection or from hope:

"He sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river rolls on through the vale of Cheapside.
* * * *
He looks, and his heart is in Heaven; but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade;
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from his eyes."





AN EVENING AT THE RYE HOUSE.

HAVING occasion to be in London, with a view to forwarding the publication of the "ANGLER'S SOUVENIR," we went out to the Lea, about the 1st of October last, to have a day's fishing, in company with two friends—Mr. William Simpson, of the firm of Simpson and Co., a native of, and resident in, the great city; and Mr. Alexander Tweddell, a far-away cousin of our own, who happened to be in London on a visit from the north. After a tolerable day's sport, we spent the evening at the Rye House, when the conversation, as might be supposed, was chiefly about angling. As none of the party expected that the evening discourse would be made public, each was unprepared to make a display; but just followed the ball of conversation as it was bandied about, without detaining it until he had delivered himself of a long-set speech, which possibly might have been in preparation for a month, and found, on being held forth, to be both stale and dry. A gentleman of the press, who, like ourselves, had come out to have a day's fishing, at this dull time of the year, when Parliament is not sitting, and nothing interesting hatched either at home or abroad, happened to occupy the small parlour—

which was only separated from that in which we were seated by a wooden partition,—and heard the whole of our conversation, which, as he had no company, he carefully took down in shorthand, in the regular way of business, intending to interweave a few of his own graces, and show up the party in a newspaper or magazine, just as he might feel himself in the humour to cut down or extend the article. He left betimes in the morning, to save the seven o'clock coach at Hoddesdon, after giving to the waiter the following note, with orders to deliver it at breakfast-time, addressed,

"*To the Piscatory Trio, Rye House.*

"Gentlemen,

"Happening last night to occupy the small parlour adjoining that in which you held your piscatory session, I was an auditor, *malgré moi*, of the whole of your conversation; of which, as I was alone and had nothing better to do, I took ample notes, in a professional way, with a view of furnishing either a quizzical report for the —— Newspaper, or a sprightly article for the —— Magazine, as fancy might suggest on re-examination of my materials.

"I do not, however, wish to act towards you with incivility, more especially as the young Scotchman, when I met him at the water-side yesterday, was so kind as to offer me a cigar from his box, when, seeing that he had steel and tinder with him,



I only asked for a light—an instance of liberality which, unless I had witnessed it myself, I should scarcely have believed one of his nation would have afforded. I therefore beg to make you the first offer of a fair transcript of my notes for the sum of five pounds, which is much less than I could obtain for them after a few heightening touches of my own—placing a cap and bells on each of your heads, or putting a few good puns into your mouths —and serving your conversation up to the public through either of the channels aforesaid.

"Should I not hear from you by to-morrow afternoon, I shall conclude that my offer is declined. "I am, etc., etc.,

"— —, Reporter.

"No. — Staples Inn."

As we chanced at this time to be in want of a "night," whose shades might give relief to the day of the "ANGLER'S SOUVENIR," we determined, with the free consent of our friends Simpson and Tweddell, to accede to this modest proposal, with a view to its insertion in our work then groaning under the press. On our return to town, we dispatched a note, the same evening, to Staples Inn, stating that Mr. ——'s offer was accepted; and desiring that the MS. might be sent, as soon as convenient, to Mr. Tilt, Fleet Street, where the sum agreed on would be duly paid. In two days the subjoined report of our sitting was sent as

directed; and is here given without addition or abridgment. The only corrections necessary were in the names of the parties, in which the reporter had committed a few venial errors: for instance, designating Tweddell as "Mr. Saunders," from having heard us once or twice familiarly address him as "Sandy;" calling Simpson "Mr. Simons," and waggishly locating him as a slopseller, in Houndsditch; and writing ourselves "The Old Fisher," in consequence of mistaking our surname for a mere agnomen, or professional designation. The songs, which were a good deal mangled, are restored, under the revision of Mr. Tweddell.

REPORT OF THE EVENING SITTING OF A PISCATORY TRIO, AT THE KING'S ARMS, RYE HOUSE.

The speakers—Simpson, Tweddell, and Fisher—dined at four; and at five business commenced by

SIMPSON proposing a toast: "To the pious and immortal memory of Izaak Walton."

(Bumpers—pints—of old Staffordshire ale, drank in solemn silence.)

FISHER (after a deep sigh, to recover his breath).—A toast worth drinking—in the "language of the cabaret," as a great man called Shakspeare's phrase—"pottle deep." A noble subject! and better ale I scarcely ever drank,—colour of a beautiful amber, clear as sherry, and fragrant as a handful of new-picked hops—a perfect nosegay. Observe that wasp, whose wings are rather stiff with rheumatic



pains—caught by being out late these chill October evenings—how he is enjoying himself at the bottom of my glass. There, the ale has warmed his heart, and away he flies, brisk as a bee that keeps humming soft nonsense to the flowers in July. I will thank you to give the toast again, Simpson.

SIMPSON.—I have no objection; but I beg to decline drinking it again in ale.

TWEDDELL.—And so do I. I have no objection to drink it again in a tumbler of toddy, if there be any good whisky to be had here.

SIMPSON.—Though you may praise this ale, Mr. Fisher, I confess that I think it rather too old. For the rest of this evening,

> "I abandon all ale
> And beer that is stale,"

and if no whisky is to be had, I shall be glad to join you, Mr. Tweddell, in a bottle of black-strap. Light dinner wines,—abominable compounds of perry and eighteen-penny Cape—are my aversion. I wonder how any person who drinks of them escapes the cholera.

TWEDDELL.—I am willing.

SIMPSON.—Waiter, a bottle of your best port. You know where to find it. Of the same that I had last Thursday. A bottle of sherry at the same time: I like a glass of sherry to a cigar. Let me have one of your Havannahs, Tweddell.

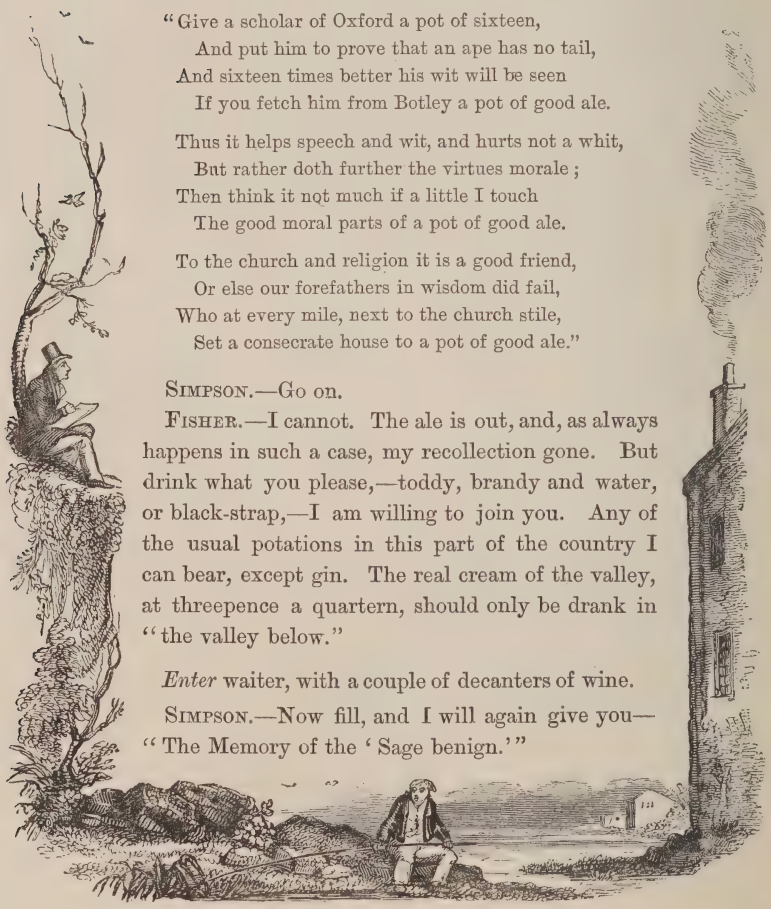
FISHER.—I was only in jest when I proposed the

other pint, as I knew that you would both shy at it. Good ale is now scarcely to be had, the more is the pity; for most beneficial in former times were its effects on the genius and morals of the nation, as we learn from the old song:

"Give a scholar of Oxford a pot of sixteen,
And put him to prove that an ape has no tail,
And sixteen times better his wit will be seen
If you fetch him from Botley a pot of good ale.

Thus it helps speech and wit, and hurts not a whit,
But rather doth further the virtues morale;
Then think it not much if a little I touch
The good moral parts of a pot of good ale.

To the church and religion it is a good friend,
Or else our forefathers in wisdom did fail,
Who at every mile, next to the church stile,
Set a consecrate house to a pot of good ale."



SIMPSON.—Go on.

FISHER.—I cannot. The ale is out, and, as always happens in such a case, my recollection gone. But drink what you please,—toddy, brandy and water, or black-strap,—I am willing to join you. Any of the usual potations in this part of the country I can bear, except gin. The real cream of the valley, at threepence a quartern, should only be drank in "the valley below."

Enter waiter, with a couple of decanters of wine.

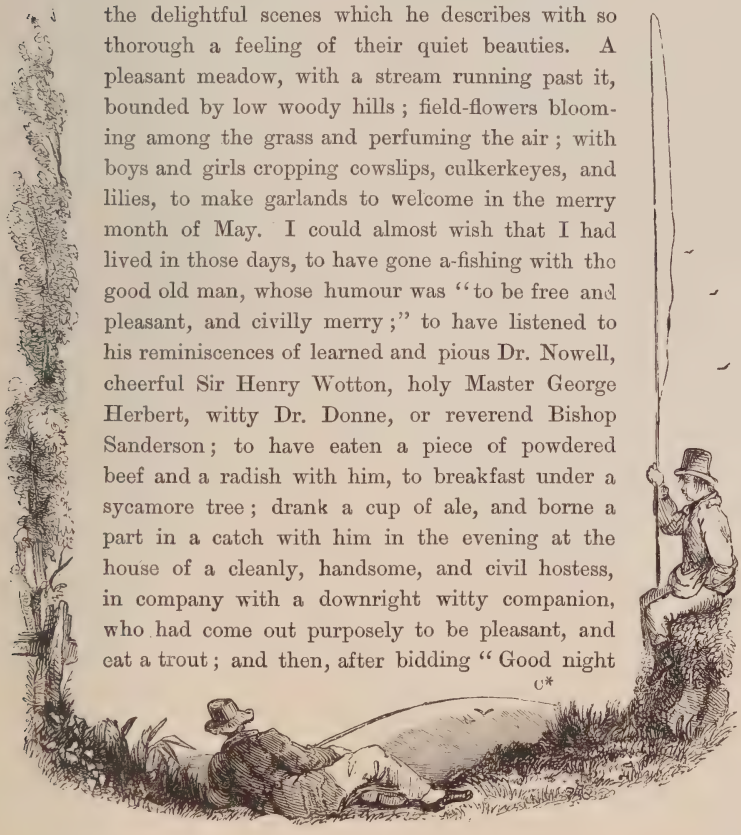
SIMPSON.—Now fill, and I will again give you—"The Memory of the 'Sage benign.'"





PUS.
LIBRA.

FISHER.—Again, I drink it with pleasure. Deservedly does the honest angler call him "father," and happy are his sons who walk in the path of their worthy parent. A spirit of cheerful piety pervades his whole book; and, as he instructs us how to angle, he interweaves his precepts with descriptions and reflections which teach us how to live happily and die well. His book is like one of the delightful scenes which he describes with so thorough a feeling of their quiet beauties. A pleasant meadow, with a stream running past it, bounded by low woody hills; field-flowers blooming among the grass and perfuming the air; with boys and girls cropping cowslips, culkerkeyes, and lilies, to make garlands to welcome in the merry month of May. I could almost wish that I had lived in those days, to have gone a-fishing with the good old man, whose humour was "to be free and pleasant, and civilly merry;" to have listened to his reminiscences of learned and pious Dr. Nowell, cheerful Sir Henry Wotton, holy Master George Herbert, witty Dr. Donne, or reverend Bishop Sanderson; to have eaten a piece of powdered beef and a radish with him, to breakfast under a sycamore tree; drank a cup of ale, and borne a part in a catch with him in the evening at the house of a cleanly, handsome, and civil hostess, in company with a downright witty companion, who had come out purposely to be pleasant, and eat a trout; and then, after bidding "Good night



to everybody," to have retired to bed, where the snow-white sheets, of the landlady's own spinning, smelt of lavender.—But,

"A change comes o'er the spirit of my dream."

The low woody hills have become mountains, and the boys and girls are changed into a flock of black-faced sheep, with a sun-freckled, red-haired lad, in a blue bonnet, herding them; the broad meadow is reduced to a narrow glen, through which a noisy stream is careering like an untamed Highland pony; and I fancy that I hear a voice addressing the lark, which is hovering in full song above her nest on the mountain side,—

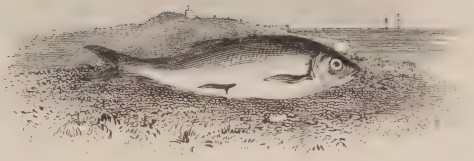
"Bird of the wilderness, blithsome and cumberless,
O, to abide in the desert with thee!"

I wish that I were home again.

SIMPSON.—You are disposed, I think, to "pastoralize a little." However highly you may admire Walton's book, it is not in much repute among the anglers who fish in the Lea. It is not considered a practical work; and I have known some who, in consequence of hearing it much praised, have bought a copy, and, after trying to read it through, have thrown it aside with expressions of surprise that any person—except a priest or a church-going old maid—could admire it.

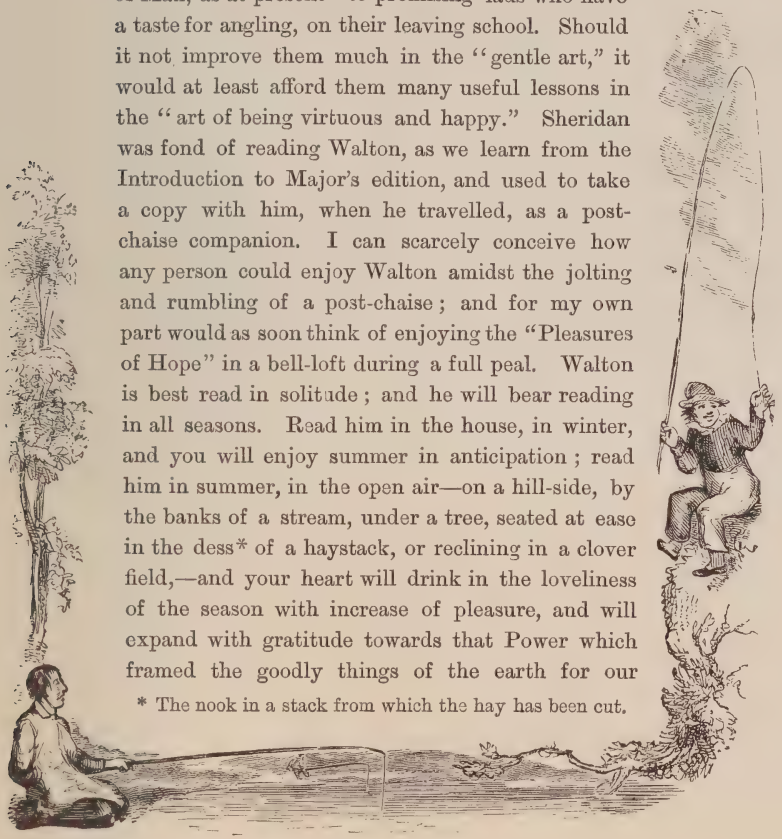
FISHER.—What can be expected from men who "blow brains" and fish on a Sunday? Walton's Angler used to be a very scarce book in the north.







Indeed until Major published his beautiful edition in 1823, I never had been able to call a copy my own. The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge ought to print an edition of this book, in order that copies might be given—together with the Book of Common Prayer and the Whole Duty of Man, as at present—to promising lads who have a taste for angling, on their leaving school. Should it not improve them much in the "gentle art," it would at least afford them many useful lessons in the "art of being virtuous and happy." Sheridan was fond of reading Walton, as we learn from the Introduction to Major's edition, and used to take a copy with him, when he travelled, as a post-chaise companion. I can scarcely conceive how any person could enjoy Walton amidst the jolting and rumbling of a post-chaise; and for my own part would as soon think of enjoying the "Pleasures of Hope" in a bell-loft during a full peal. Walton is best read in solitude; and he will bear reading in all seasons. Read him in the house, in winter, and you will enjoy summer in anticipation; read him in summer, in the open air—on a hill-side, by the banks of a stream, under a tree, seated at ease in the dess* of a haystack, or reclining in a clover field,—and your heart will drink in the loveliness of the season with increase of pleasure, and will expand with gratitude towards that Power which framed the goodly things of the earth for our



* The nook in a stack from which the hay has been cut.

enjoyment. "Live ever, sweet book, the silver image of his gentle wit!"

SIMPSON.—I highly admire Walton's work myself, though I do not make it the text-book for a lay sermon over a bottle of wine.

FISHER.—You have not much taste for sermons, I believe, whether lay, extempore, and over a bottle; or clerical, savouring of the lamp, and over a cushion. But to have done with sermonizing. This is a tolerably pleasant place, Simpson, for a bachelor like yourself to spend a few days at, and basket a stone or two of roach, or half a dozen brace of jack, since you have nothing better that is comeatable near London at this time of year. Do you ever fish fly for trout now?



SIMPSON.—O yes, in the season. I subscribe to two waters which afford trout, one at the Wandle, and the other at the Colne; and I sometimes get a day's fishing in the preserved waters of two friends, one of whom resides at Mitcham, and the other near Rickmansworth.

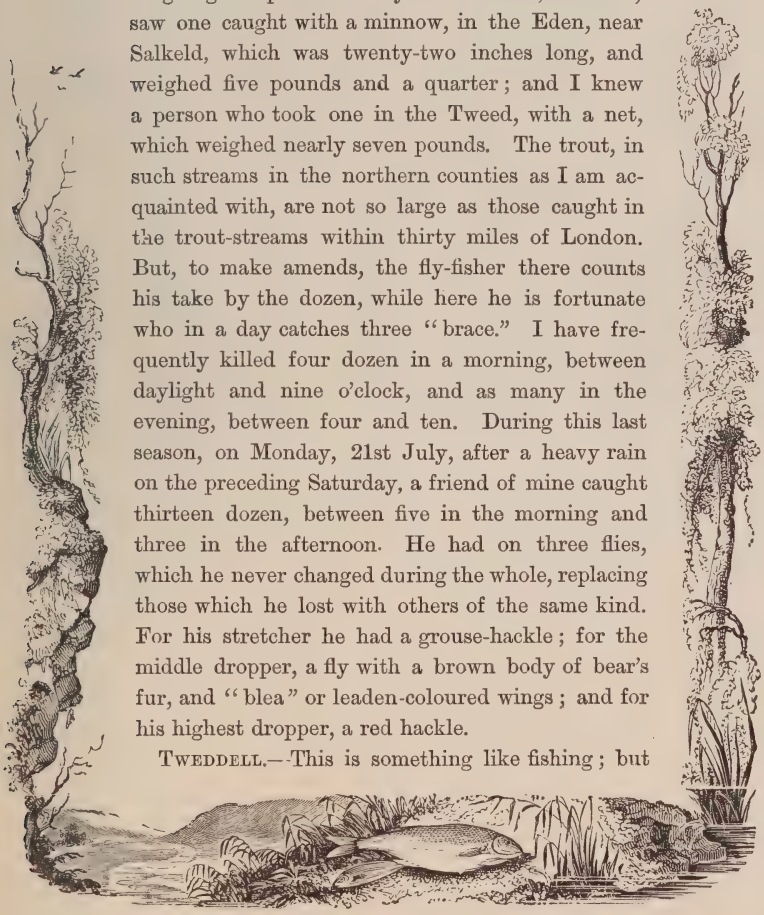
FISHER.—And do you manage to catch many?

SIMPSON.—Why, as you, who count by dozens, understand the word, I cannot say that I do. But I have taken, I believe, in those streams in a season more large trout than ever you caught in beck, burn, or river, north of the Trent—always excepting sea-trout—in your life. In one season, from the 1st of May to the 1st of September, I have taken with the fly three trouts, each weighing

upwards of five pounds, besides two others which weighed three pounds and a half each.

FISHER.—In this I must yield you the palm. I never caught one real yellow-finned burn trout weighing five pounds in my life. I once, however, saw one caught with a minnow, in the Eden, near Salkeld, which was twenty-two inches long, and weighed five pounds and a quarter; and I knew a person who took one in the Tweed, with a net, which weighed nearly seven pounds. The trout, in such streams in the northern counties as I am acquainted with, are not so large as those caught in the trout-streams within thirty miles of London. But, to make amends, the fly-fisher there counts his take by the dozen, while here he is fortunate who in a day catches three "brace." I have frequently killed four dozen in a morning, between daylight and nine o'clock, and as many in the evening, between four and ten. During this last season, on Monday, 21st July, after a heavy rain on the preceding Saturday, a friend of mine caught thirteen dozen, between five in the morning and three in the afternoon. He had on three flies, which he never changed during the whole, replacing those which he lost with others of the same kind. For his stretcher he had a grouse-hackle; for the middle dropper, a fly with a brown body of bear's fur, and "blea" or leaden-coloured wings; and for his highest dropper, a red hackle.

TWEDDELL.—This is something like fishing; but



almost any one, man or boy, who has the use of his arms, and can throw five yards of line into the water, without the instructions of a scientific teacher, may catch trout by fishing well up a stream after a spate or fresh, though not in such quantities as a proficient in the art. The true secret of old fly-fishers, who scarcely ever return with a light creel, is only to go to the water when, from long observation, they are almost certain that trouts will rise. An old fly-fisher, who lived near Sanquhar, and whom I have often fished with, up Spank and down Crawick, in Ken, Scar, and Yeochan, once told me, when I was questioning as to the secret of his success, that for a gill of whisky he would tell me how I might always succeed. It was a bargain. "Ne'er fish but when trouts are hungry, and fish aye where they're plenty." "But how am I to know that?" "In troth," replied he, "I canna verra well tell ye. But ye'll no find mony within twa miles o' where ye can see at ae gliff, a manse, a mill, and a public, nor nigh a place where tinklers often camp. Trouts dinna seem inclined to take their meat for a fortnight after sheep-washin', nor when the water's verra high or verra low. They dinna feed freely outher on a warm bright day nor on a cauld dark ane; and the feck o' them keep a black fast in a' weathers, atween Michaelmas and Easter." I have seen a lad sit down by the water-side, near the head of Yeochan, and, with a few threads from his bonnet and the feather of a





curlew, dress a fly on a common hook—not to a length of gut clear as the thread of the gossamer and almost as fine, but to a dingy link of five cow's hairs, for he had no thought of playing with the trouts—and then, with a rough hazel rod, about nine feet long, and a line to match, begin fishing; and in two hours catch as many trouts as some cockney fly-fishers, whose rod, flies, and tackle may have cost them ten pounds, take in a whole season.

SIMPSON.—What you say proves that in streams where trouts are so plentiful not much skill is required to take them. May we not, then, conclude that the best fly-fishers are to be found in London, as they are confined to angle in waters where the fish are scarce, and so shy as only to be caught with the finest tackle skilfully managed?

TWEDDELL.—You may conclude so: and, upon the same grounds, you may also infer that cockney sportsmen, who range the fields within ten or fifteen miles of London, where partridges are scarce and shy, are the best shots.

FISHER.—I know that there are excellent fly-fishers in London; but the best, I am inclined to think, did not acquire their craft in the Colne or the Wandle, though they may now and then occasionally basket a few heavy trout from those streams. Chantrey can throw a long line cleverly, either for trout or salmon; but he was a proficient in the art, having killed many a trout in Dovedale, before he came to London, and I doubt if he be improved



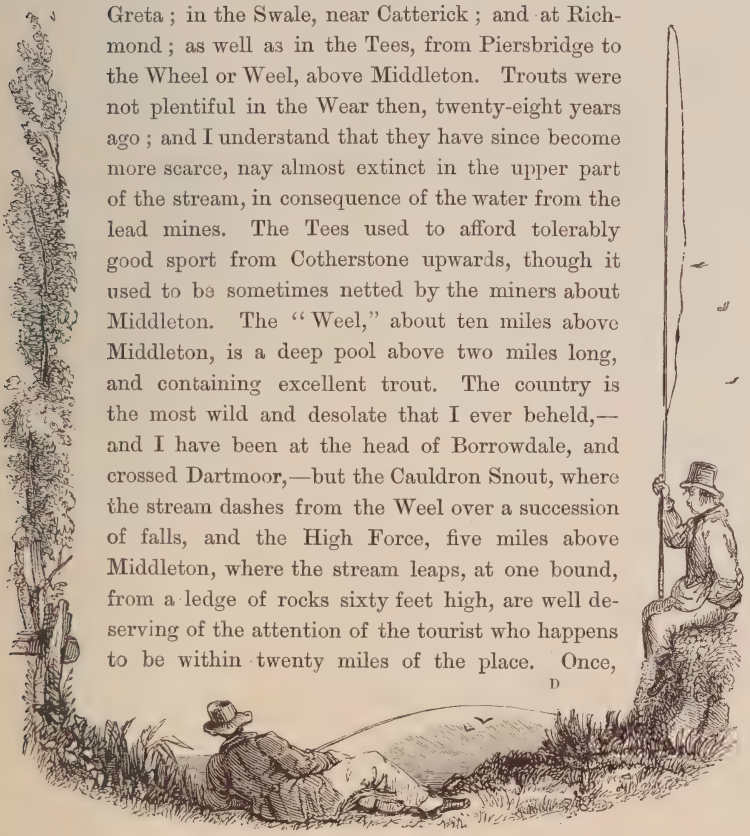
much since he became an R.A. Sir Walter Scott has mentioned, but where I forget, Chantrey's partiality to salmon-fishing; and, as I have the words down in my pocket-book, I will read them. "We have ourselves seen the first sculptor in Europe when he had taken two salmon on the same morning, and can well believe that his sense of self-importance exceeded twenty-fold that which he felt on the production of any of the masterpieces which have immortalized him."

TWEDDELL.—I think I have heard you say that you did not acquire your own knowledge of fly-fishing in London, Mr. Simpson?

SIMPSON.—True. When a boy, I was at school near Cotherstone, in Yorkshire, and it was there, in the Tees, and in a small stream which ran close to our master's house, that I first commenced angler. I did not commence fly-fisher at once, but regularly advanced through a course of minnow-fishing, with a line of packthread and a farthing hook; and I well recollect my first trial for perch, with a new rod and a fine hair line, when I caught fifteen, and thought myself a first-rate angler; and certainly felt myself one of the happiest of human beings. After this successful commencement, with something like a regular angler's tackle, all my leisure hours and holidays, when the weather allowed, were spent in fishing; and as I managed to take a good many eels, perch, dace, and brandling trouts, I became a favourite with the master's wife, who



was a great economist, and regularly served up my evening's take for dinner the next day, and I frequently obtained, through her intercession, a holiday, to go a-fishing. My lessons in fly-fishing were taken under our drawing-master, as great a proficient in the art as ever I met with, and in his company I have fished in the Wear, in the neighbourhood of Stanhope and Wolsingham; in the Greta; in the Swale, near Catterick; and at Richmond; as well as in the Tees, from Piersbridge to the Wheel or Weel, above Middleton. Trouts were not plentiful in the Wear then, twenty-eight years ago; and I understand that they have since become more scarce, nay almost extinct in the upper part of the stream, in consequence of the water from the lead mines. The Tees used to afford tolerably good sport from Cotherstone upwards, though it used to be sometimes netted by the miners about Middleton. The "Weel," about ten miles above Middleton, is a deep pool above two miles long, and containing excellent trout. The country is the most wild and desolate that I ever beheld,—and I have been at the head of Borrowdale, and crossed Dartmoor,—but the Cauldron Snout, where the stream dashes from the Weel over a succession of falls, and the High Force, five miles above Middleton, where the stream leaps, at one bound, from a ledge of rocks sixty feet high, are well deserving of the attention of the tourist who happens to be within twenty miles of the place. Once,





during a vacation, when I did not return home, I spent a week with our drawing-master, who was residing with his friends at Richmond. We went out together one day to an excellent trout-stream, near Burton Constable, about seven miles to the southward, and were following our sport to our great satisfaction, for the trouts were large and rose well, when a countryman came up, and attempted to take my companion's rod from him as a trespasser who was fishing without leave. This, of course, was resisted, and a struggle ensued, in which the artist,—who was but weakly, while his antagonist was a big, powerful fellow,—was likely to come off only second-best, when I, a stout lad of sixteen, joined as thirdsman in the fray, and turned the scale. We soon got the countryman—a great hen-hearted fellow—down, and without any regard to what is called fair play, pummelled him well when we had him down; but that was not long, for he soon recovered his legs, and ran off; while we, who were swifter of foot, gave chase, and belaboured him with the butt-end of our rods right across the field, till he escaped by dashing headforemost through a regular bullfinch hedge, like an ox stung by hornets. We afterwards learnt that the fellow had no right to interfere with us, and had only wished to get a good rod at a cheap rate. But for once the Yorkshireman was bit.



FISHER.—Youth is certainly the period when a love of the fine arts, including angling, is most





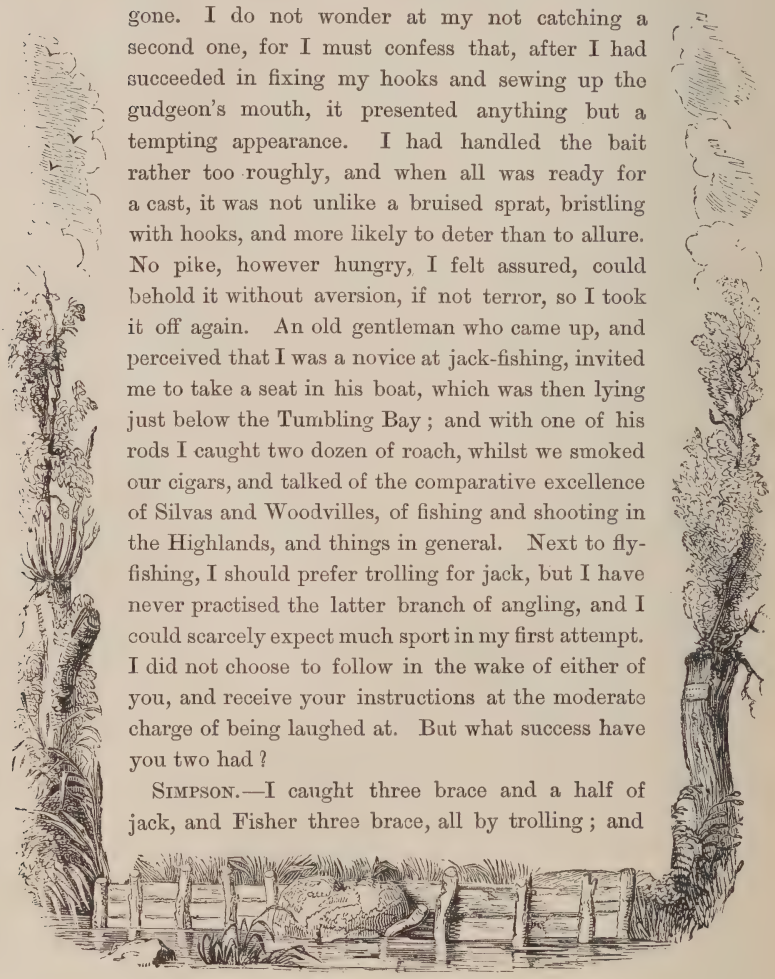
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easily and most naturally inspired, and a practical knowledge of them most readily attained. The pliant fingers of youth, from ten to sixteen, are peculiarly adapted to tying delicate knots, whipping on hooks, and dressing flies; and he who first begins to learn those minor branches of an angler's art after his hand is "set," seldom performs his work with neatness, and never with ease. And then to see a gentleman who has arrived at years of discretion taking lessons in managing the rod and throwing gracefully a long line, is about as good as a peep at Mr. Deputy Hopkins, who never learned to dance till after he was married, practising a quadrille, for the Mansion House ball, with his coat and wig off. Most of our practical books on angling are written, not for the "instruction and improvement of youth," but for the edification of elderly gentlemen who are presumed never to have had a rod in their hands before; and the dry-nurse of a teacher "begins at the beginning" accordingly. I think it would be worth any professor's while to open an Angling Academy at Peerless Pool, City Road, when it is no longer used for bathing, to teach grown gentlemen the use of the long rod,—applying a birch one, *solito loco*, when needful, to dull or refractory pupils,—with examples of the art of whipping without cracking off the fly. How did you succeed in your trolling to-day, Tweddell?

TWEDDELL.—Very badly. I only caught one jack after a two hours' trial; and when I thought



to change my gorge hook for a snap, I was nearly another hour before I could fix my bait as the book directed, and then the best part of the day was gone. I do not wonder at my not catching a second one, for I must confess that, after I had succeeded in fixing my hooks and sewing up the gudgeon's mouth, it presented anything but a tempting appearance. I had handled the bait rather too roughly, and when all was ready for a cast, it was not unlike a bruised sprat, bristling with hooks, and more likely to deter than to allure. No pike, however hungry, I felt assured, could behold it without aversion, if not terror, so I took it off again. An old gentleman who came up, and perceived that I was a novice at jack-fishing, invited me to take a seat in his boat, which was then lying just below the Tumbling Bay; and with one of his rods I caught two dozen of roach, whilst we smoked our cigars, and talked of the comparative excellence of Silvas and Woodvilles, of fishing and shooting in the Highlands, and things in general. Next to fly-fishing, I should prefer trolling for jack, but I have never practised the latter branch of angling, and I could scarcely expect much sport in my first attempt. I did not choose to follow in the wake of either of you, and receive your instructions at the moderate charge of being laughed at. But what success have you two had?



SIMPSON.—I caught three brace and a half of jack, and Fisher three brace, all by trolling; and

this, considering that the water is so clear, and has still so many weeds in it, is tolerably good sport for a five hours' bout at the commencement of the season. They were all rather small, under four pounds, except one of those caught by Fisher, which I think will not weigh much less than nine pounds. I have not seen a better taken in the Lea this season. I had a run with one, which, from the glance I had of him as he turned, I should take to be larger; but though he had plenty of time to pouch, I failed to hook him.

FISHER.—I had twenty minutes' good play with the largest pike, for my tackle was rather of the finest, and he was so strong and pulled hard. I nearly lost him once, just as I had brought him near the shore, and was preparing to get his head into the landing-net. Alarmed at the sight of the net, his fear gave him new strength, and he went off with a plunge which I thought had broken all away; but my tackle held good. It was his last effort, for after he had run off about thirty yards of line, I felt him getting weak, when I turned him and drew him to land fairly exhausted. He was dead-beat, and when I got him into the net, he scarcely moved a fin.

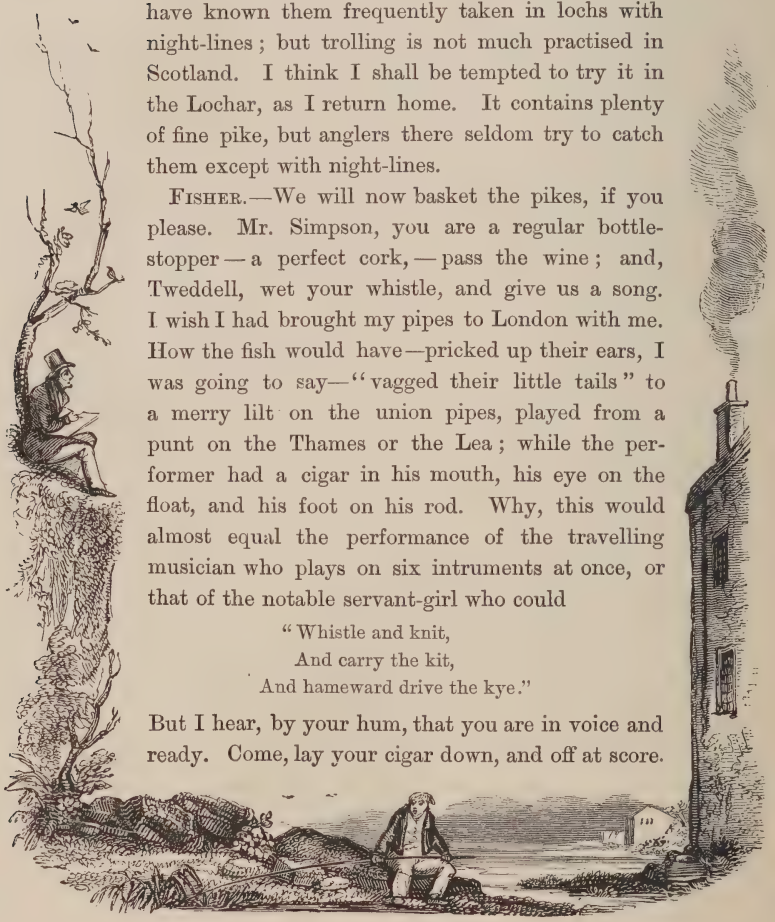
SIMPSON.—Though the cockney angler may not take so many nor so fine fish as are caught in the north, yet he enjoys a greater variety of sport. I suppose there is not much trolling in the neighbourhood of Sanquhar, Mr. Tweddell?

TWEDDELL.—Very little. The streams are too rapid there to afford much harbour for pike, or ged, as they are frequently called in Dumfriesshire. They are, however, caught in several streams in the lower part of the county about Dumfries; and I have known them frequently taken in lochs with night-lines; but trolling is not much practised in Scotland. I think I shall be tempted to try it in the Lochar, as I return home. It contains plenty of fine pike, but anglers there seldom try to catch them except with night-lines.

FISHER.—We will now basket the pikes, if you please. Mr. Simpson, you are a regular bottle-stopper—a perfect cork,—pass the wine; and, Tweddell, wet your whistle, and give us a song. I wish I had brought my pipes to London with me. How the fish would have—pricked up their ears, I was going to say—"vagged their little tails" to a merry lilt on the union pipes, played from a punt on the Thames or the Lea; while the performer had a cigar in his mouth, his eye on the float, and his foot on his rod. Why, this would almost equal the performance of the travelling musician who plays on six intruments at once, or that of the notable servant-girl who could

"Whistle and knit,
And carry the kit,
And hameward drive the kye."

But I hear, by your hum, that you are in voice and ready. Come, lay your cigar down, and off at score.



TWEDDELL.—Have a minute's patience, till I can recollect the words, and I will give you a "Fisher's Call." I am not sure that I can go through it without breaking down, for I have never yet sung it in company, though I have now and then crooned over a few lines to myself. You know the writer well, an old angling crony of yours; but you cannot have heard the song before, as mine is the only copy that he has given to any one.

THE ANGLER'S REVEILLÉ.

Old Winter is gone, and young Spring now comes tripping;
Sweet flowers are springing wherever she treads;
While the bee, hovering o'er them, keeps humming and sipping,
And birds sing her welcome in woodlands and meads.
The snow-wreath no more on the hillside is lying;
The leaf-buds are bursting, bright green, on each tree·
Ho, anglers, arouse ye! the streams are worth trying,
Fit your rods, and away to the fishing with me!

Haste away! haste away! for the south wind is blowing,
And rippling so gently the face of the stream,
Which neither too full nor too fine yet is flowing,
Now clouded, now bright with a sunshiny gleam.
At the foot of the fall, where the bright trouts are leaping,
In the stream where the current is rapid and strong,
Or just by the bank where the skeggers seem sleeping,
There throw your fly light, and you cannot throw wrong.

There's joy in the chase, over hedge and ditch flying;
'Tis pleasant to bring down the grouse on the fell;
The partridge to bag, through the low stubble trying;
The pheasant to shoot as he flies through the dell.



But what are such joys to the pleasure of straying
By the side of a stream, a long line throwing free,
The salmon and trout with a neat fly betraying?—
Fit your rods, and away to the fishing with me!

To awaken the milkmaid, the cock is yet crowing,
She was out late last night, with young Hodge, at the fair;—
To be milked yet the cows in the loaning are lowing;
We'll be at our sport ere young Nelly be there.
The weather is prime, and the stream in good order;
Arouse ye, then, anglers, wherever you be,—
In Scotland, in Ireland, in Wales, on the Border,—
Fit your rods, and away to the fishing with me!

FISHER.—Good!

"In Scotland, in Ireland, in Wales, on the Border,—
Fit your rods, and away to the fishing with me!"

Some one has been conjuring with your song, Tweddell, for three spirits have already appeared at the invocation—an anonymous angler in Ireland, Hansard in Wales, and Stephen Oliver on the Border. But the spell has not been sufficiently powerful to rouse that master-spirit in Scotland, to whom every stream and loch is known in that

"Land of the mountain and the flood;"

who at one time may be seen throwing his light fly in the Tweed, by the "lovely levels of holy Ashiestiel,"—consecrated as having been formerly the residence of Sir Walter Scott,

"For the lore
Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
Of human hearts, the ruin of a wall
Where dwelt the wise and wondrous ——;"

at another time wiling the bold trout, Salmo Ferox, from the depths of Loch Awe; and anon, waking the echoes with a lofty strain, as he hails the morn, amidst the wilds of Morven.

SIMPSON.—Four have answered the summons—you forget Captain Medwin's "Angler in Wales."

FISHER.—He is a spirit of another class, who has approached the circle unbidden. The "Angler in Wales"! why I see not the least trace of the angler throughout the two volumes. He might as well have "unbuckled his mail"—stuffed with fragments of "travellers' tales" and scraps from the feast of languages—at Calcutta, and called his book the "Angler in Hindostan." Independent of the misnomer, it is not written in the spirit of an angler. How could it? when the doer, whoever he may be, probably never handled a rod, or felt the inspiration of the art, in his life. The calm and cheerful spirit, which the love and practice of angling inspire, is not to be found in the book. From his "scattering his water" on Byron's ashes, it is not difficult to read his riddle. The noble bard should have dedicated one of his poems to his friend—Heaven save us from such friends!—and appointed him one of his executors. Then, perhaps, Rogers, Moore, and Hobhouse might have

been saved from the blunt, clumsy sabre of his satire, which only mangles, but does not cut; and Byron himself not have been shown up by his friend as a petulant coxcomb and a flash blackguard. I cannot for a moment believe that Byron, with all his faults, was the despicable character that Medwin, *soi-disant* Byron's friend, and Angler in Wales, represent him.

SIMPSON.—Take a cigar, Fisher, or you will lose your temper; and tell us calmly what scandal about Lord Byron it is that moves your bile.

FISHER.—I might then tell you nearly all that is said about him in the book. He is represented, on the day that the author of the "Pleasures of Memory" and of "Italy" was expected to call on him, ordering his bulldog and his monkey into the billiard-room, where he intended to receive his visitor, for the purpose of annoying him. When Mr. Rogers entered, it is said the dog rushed furiously at him, and was encouraged by Byron, while, without noticing his visitor, he pretended to call the brute off. At length he thought good to discover the cause of the affray, to kick Tiger off, and press his "dear friend" in his arms,—to the great entertainment, I conclude, if the story be true, of the toadeaters present, who flattered and encouraged the noble poet in his wayward follies as the price of their admission to his society; and who, when he was in his grave, for the sake of dishonourable gain, exposed and exaggerated his follies and his vices,





and held him up to the contempt of the world. If this story were true, Byron and his bulldog should have been served in the same manner that Lieutenant Bowling served Roderick Random's brutal cousin and his quadruped auxiliaries. Tiger should have been silenced with a blow from a shillelagh, and his master floored by a right-handed hit between the eyes, and afterwards kicked as he lay, *ad putorem usque*, as a reward for his unmanly conduct. I think I know one living poet who would have done it, had he been served so, and have made the jackals grin on the wrong side of the face had he observed them encouraging the fun by their sardonic smiles, *ad examplar regis*, after the fashion of the lion, upon whom they then fawned, when living, but preyed, like unclean animals as they were, upon his carcase when dead. It is no joke to have a bulldog within a couple of yards of you, watching an opportunity to rush in and seize you by the throat. I know what the feeling is, and therefore am disposed to think very indifferently of the man who would wantonly place another in such a situation. I was once passing over a lonely moor in the north of England, when I came suddenly upon a gipsy's encampment, and before I perceived any of the party, a long-backed, bow-legged, brindled bulldog made towards me, showing his formidable teeth, and eyes glaring with rage. I stood still the moment I saw him, and he was just crouching preparatory to a spring, when his master, who had

observed him rush from under the cart, called him off. "He is a savage-looking animal," said I to the man, as the dog skulked slowly to his resting-place. "He is a savage," replied the man, "and we never let him lowse but in places where we dinna expect to meet strangers. It's weel for ye that I saw him spring up, or he wad hae had your thropple out afore ye could cry 'Jack Robison.'" I felt the truth of this at the moment most forcibly, as I was walking, in consequence of the heat of the day, with no handkerchief on and my neck bare. I afterwards learnt that the savage disposition of this dog was purposely encouraged by his owner,—who occasionally smuggled a little whisky from the Scottish side into England,—for the purpose of keeping excisemen at a distance.

SIMPSON.—I am not so sceptical as you are. I can believe this of Byron

FISHER.—Can you? Then you entertain more uncharitable feelings towards his memory than I do, for what can you think of the man who could be guilty of such an act of wanton cruelty and insult to a friend, or acquaintance, if you please, who was neither young nor strong? To have placed a pailful of water over the door, and thus practically have given him a cool reception as he entered, would have been a better joke, and more excusable.

SIMPSON.—I think it the act of a man whose better feelings had been brutalized by having little or no social intercourse with those whose conduct,





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or manly reproof, might repress or correct those disgraceful freaks which a man of unsettled mind and capricious temper is liable to indulge in, when surrounded only by those who are far beneath him, or whose only passport to his company is their perfect compliance with, and applause of, everything that he says or does. I have more than once seen a man of really good heart, in a moment when he forgot himself, give pain to a long-tried, worthy friend, to gratify a small knot of ephemeral acquaintances by whom he happened to be surrounded.—Were you never caught yourself, scarcely *compos*, by a grave old friend, leading the revels among a graceless crew, whom, in your sober senses and in daylight, you would be ashamed to be seen with? and, as he left the room, more in sorrow than in anger, have you not joined in the laugh which the professed wit of the party raised at his expense?

FISHER.—I am still sceptical. But even should a person, not thoroughly insensible to every better feeling, find himself in the last predicament, would he not, on reflection, be ashamed of his conduct, endeavour to make reparation to his friend, and shun the company of the flatterers who corrupt him?

SIMPSON.—In such manner I believe Byron would act.

FISHER.—Byron's living with another man's wife, the Countess Guicciola, is as well known as his feat of swimming across the Hellespont. She had



abandoned for him husband, home, and good name —if there be such a thing as female reputation in Italy;—and yet he is represented as speaking of her in a most unfeeling manner to one of his "friends," just after she had passed them on a ride: "I loved her for three weeks,—what a red-headed thing it is!" This "red-headed thing," at the same time, living with him as a wife! Believe this of Byron who likes, not I. It is more likely that the reporter "lies—under a mistake," as Byron himself writes, than that the author of "Childe Harold" was so heartless a being.

SIMPSON.—I am inclined to think that these anecdotes, which give so unfavourable an account of Byron, have prejudiced you against the general merits of the book as a work on angling.

FISHER.—Work on angling!—though you say you have looked it through, you cannot have read it, or you would never allude to it as a work on angling. Why, there is nothing in it but what Rammohun Roy, who never caught a trout in his life, might have written with the aid of a sixpenny "Art of Angling." So far from entertaining any prejudice against the book, I read on past the scandalous anecdotes about Byron, till I was fairly brought up by a "Poem" at the end, about Julian and Gizele, the Pindarries, Zalim, Spahees, Beils Ghebres, Goorkhas, Bringarries, etc., etc. I then fairly saw land. The "thing" had been "done" expressly for the circulating libraries, with the

chance of hooking an angler from the title. There is a capital blunder in his first volume, where he gives a quotation from Nemesian, as illustrative of the instinct of a bitch. He must have picked the passage up somewhere, ready cut and dry, for it is evident he cannot have read the context. The poet means that a bitch, when her whelps are surrounded by a circle of fire, will rescue the best first, from an instinctive knowledge of its excellence. The original passage,—

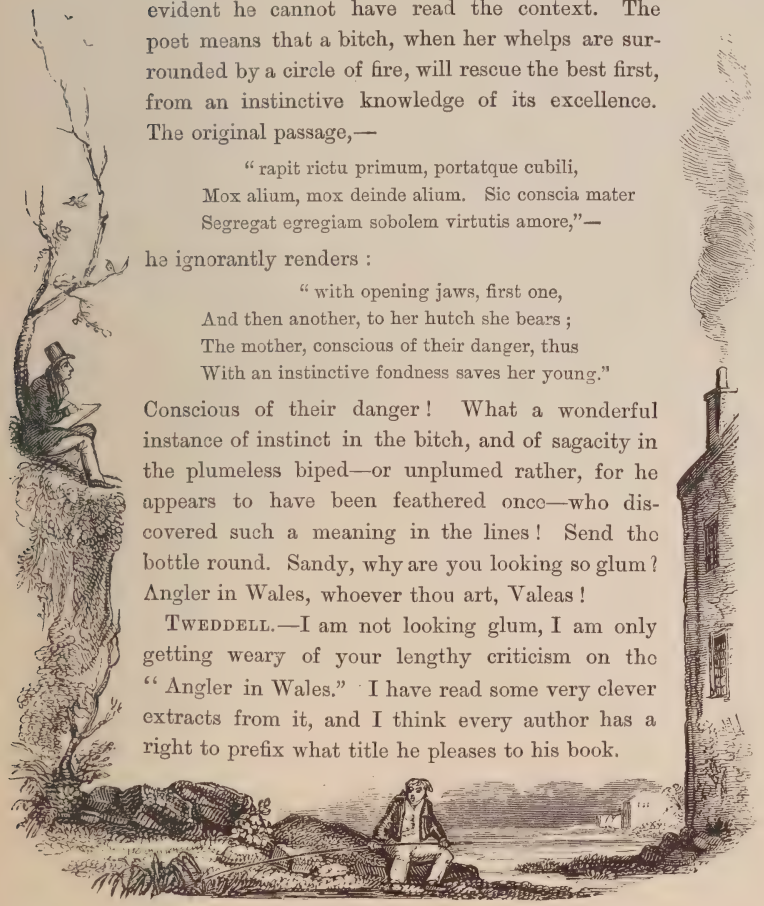
> "rapit rictu primum, portatque cubili,
> Mox alium, mox deinde alium. Sic conscia mater
> Segregat egregiam sobolem virtutis amore,"—

he ignorantly renders :

> "with opening jaws, first one,
> And then another, to her hutch she bears ;
> The mother, conscious of their danger, thus
> With an instinctive fondness saves her young."

Conscious of their danger! What a wonderful instance of instinct in the bitch, and of sagacity in the plumeless biped—or unplumed rather, for he appears to have been feathered once—who discovered such a meaning in the lines! Send the bottle round. Sandy, why are you looking so glum? Angler in Wales, whoever thou art, Valeas!

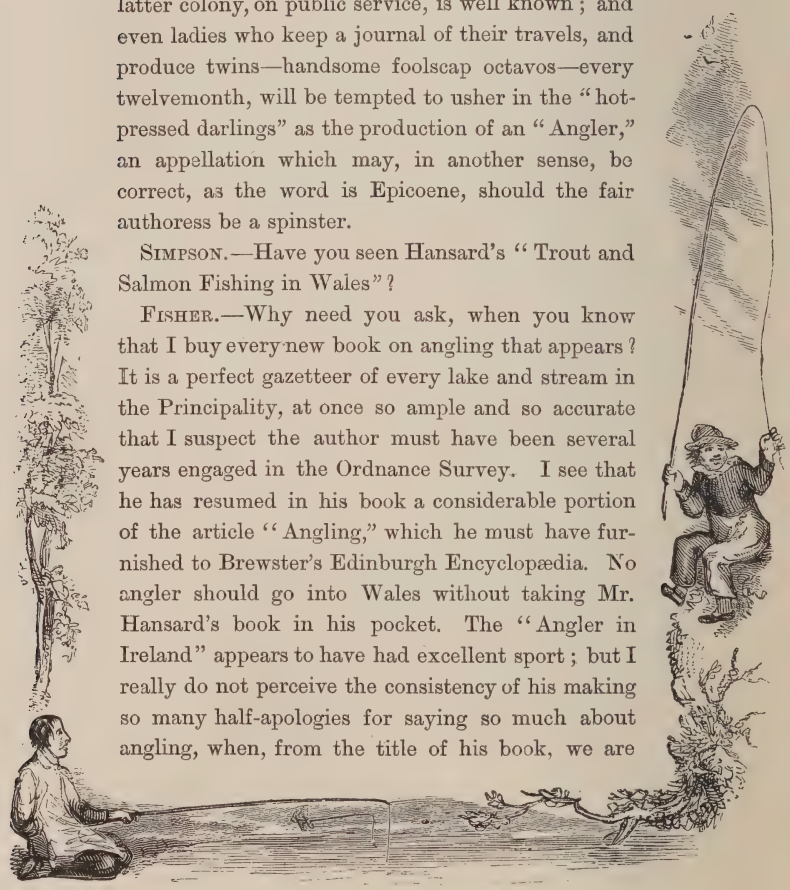
TWEDDELL.—I am not looking glum, I am only getting weary of your lengthy criticism on the "Angler in Wales." I have read some very clever extracts from it, and I think every author has a right to prefix what title he pleases to his book.



FISHER.—Do you? Then if "Angling," "Angling Recollections," and so forth, prove taking titles, we shall soon have Anglers in Italy, France, Holland, Germany, Egypt, America, Africa, and New South Wales;—that there are several pocket-anglers in the latter colony, on public service, is well known; and even ladies who keep a journal of their travels, and produce twins—handsome foolscap octavos—every twelvemonth, will be tempted to usher in the "hot-pressed darlings" as the production of an "Angler," an appellation which may, in another sense, be correct, as the word is Epicoene, should the fair authoress be a spinster.

SIMPSON.—Have you seen Hansard's "Trout and Salmon Fishing in Wales"?

FISHER.—Why need you ask, when you know that I buy every new book on angling that appears? It is a perfect gazetteer of every lake and stream in the Principality, at once so ample and so accurate that I suspect the author must have been several years engaged in the Ordnance Survey. I see that he has resumed in his book a considerable portion of the article "Angling," which he must have furnished to Brewster's Edinburgh Encyclopædia. No angler should go into Wales without taking Mr. Hansard's book in his pocket. The "Angler in Ireland" appears to have had excellent sport; but I really do not perceive the consistency of his making so many half-apologies for saying so much about angling, when, from the title of his book, we are



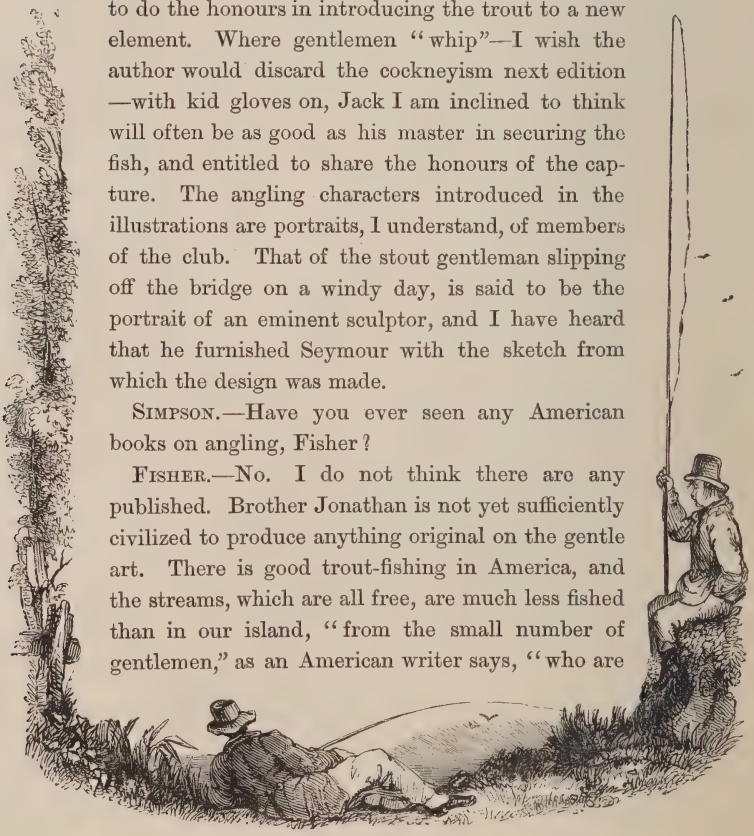
led to expect that angling would form his principal subject. One might suppose that his book was first written as an account of a tour generally, and that the portions which treat more expressly of angling were afterwards dovetailed in. He, however, writes like one who could make a long and clever cast, and who has a heart to feel all the beauties which lie exposed to the honest cultivator of the gentle art. His book will bear reading a second time, even by one who may think him too partial to the "orange-fly," and a *leetle* too ostentatious of chronicling his punctual observance of the "Sabbath." Were it not for his stating that he goes to church, I should be sometimes inclined to suspect him to be a hired distributor of tracts to some sectarian "Society for Converting the Heathen." Stephen Oliver, too, the Yorkshireman, who makes the Border counties—Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland—the scene of his angling recollections, now and then gives us a touch of the mock sublime, and writes as if he had just been refreshing his memory from Harvey's "Meditations in a Flower Garden." But fill up a bumper —here's to them all, and success attend them: The Angler in Ireland, Hansard, and Oliver,—light hearts and well-filled creels, with a good account of their next piscatory campaigns!

SIMPSON.—There is a clever little book, "Maxims and Hints for an Angler," with illustrations by Seymour, which you have not mentioned.

FISHER.—It is a clever little book, but not of this year's brood; and the hints and maxims of the author, who modestly styles himself a "bungler," I should think would do credit to any of the adepts of the Houghton Club. I see, from the illustrations, that the members are cased up to the fork in enormous boots, and that a smockfrocked or liveried attendant, with a landing-net, is always in waiting to do the honours in introducing the trout to a new element. Where gentlemen "whip"—I wish the author would discard the cockneyism next edition—with kid gloves on, Jack I am inclined to think will often be as good as his master in securing the fish, and entitled to share the honours of the capture. The angling characters introduced in the illustrations are portraits, I understand, of members of the club. That of the stout gentleman slipping off the bridge on a windy day, is said to be the portrait of an eminent sculptor, and I have heard that he furnished Seymour with the sketch from which the design was made.

SIMPSON.—Have you ever seen any American books on angling, Fisher?

FISHER.—No. I do not think there are any published. Brother Jonathan is not yet sufficiently civilized to produce anything original on the gentle art. There is good trout-fishing in America, and the streams, which are all free, are much less fished than in our island, "from the small number of gentlemen," as an American writer says, "who are



at leisure to give their time to it." We are further assured, by the same authority, that ladies do not so often partake of this amusement in the States as in England.



SIMPSON.—Lady anglers—at least for fish—are far from numerous in England, so far as my observation extends. I have not seen one for these last three years, though I heard of one the other day tumbling out of a punt, as she was angling for gudgeons with her father in the Lea, near Bow. She was soon fished up; and after being treated, *secundum artem*,—according to the directions of the Humane Society,—came to herself, and was conveyed home in a cab, as she had lost one of her shoes.

FISHER.—There is one mentioned in the "Angler in Wales," who is in the habit of regularly fishing fly, attended by her abigail. This lady appears, from what is said of her, to be as well acquainted with the turf as the stream; and Chiffney or Scott might take lessons from her in the art of training and managing the race-horse. She is musical, too. How delightful to hear the syren, familiar with the beauties of Rossini, after her return from giving her hunter a breathing,

"Whistle sweet a diuretic strain!"

I do not like to see ladies either angling or playing on the fiddle. These are not ladylike accomplishments, any more than smoothing the chins of

bristle-bearded coalheavers is a feminine employment. I cannot bear a female barber or a male "chamber-maid." Do many ladies angle in Scotland, Tweddell?

TWEDDELL.—Not to my knowledge. I have known a lady once or twice try a few casts with a gentleman's rod, and hook a trout too, but I cannot say that I ever knew one who was a professional fly-fisher. I, however, once saw a woman kill two salmon, with a fly, in the Tweed, about a mile above Kelso, in March 1832. She fished from a boat, which was also managed by a female companion. I was out with a friend the same day, and though we had several rises, we both failed in killing a single salmon.

FISHER.—*Cedant braccae stolae*,—"Fie, Sandy, yield the breeks to Meg!"—What kind of sport have you had in trout-fishing in your part of the country this season?

TWEDDELL.—Not very good, except in the early part. In such a dry summer as this has been there is not much sport after sheep-washing begins, unless there be a good spate shortly after to purify the streams. During sheep-washing, and for a fortnight or three weeks afterwards, trout are very shy of rising, more especially if the water be low. I have often spoken with old anglers about the cause of this, and have heard different reasons assigned for this shyness of the trout. One says that they are sick, in consequence of the water being im-

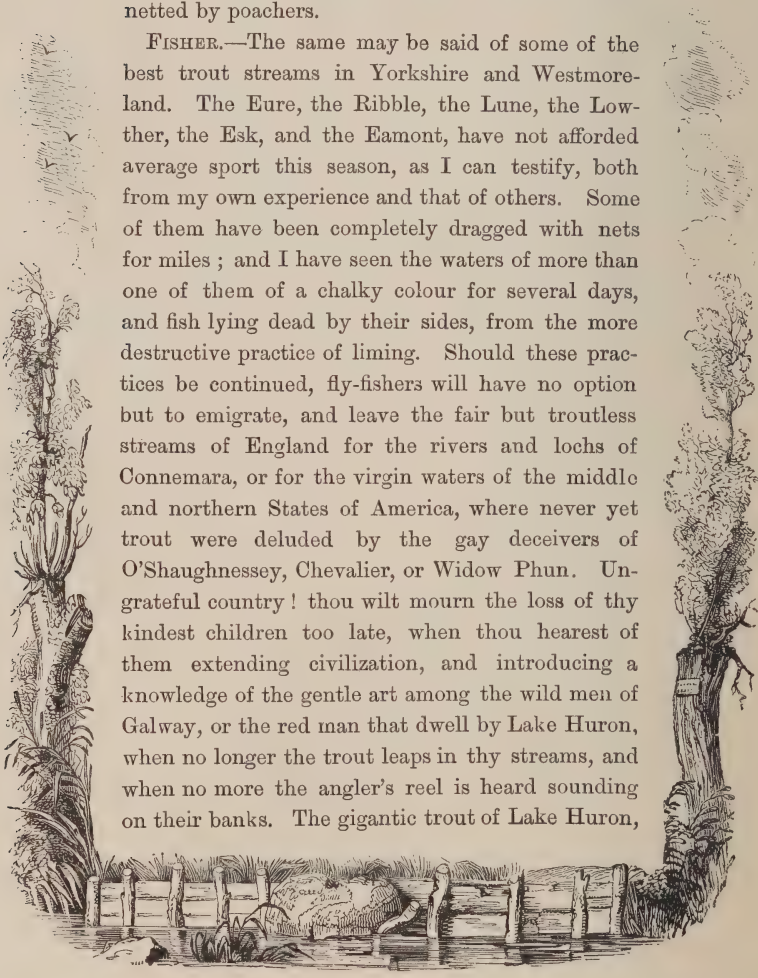
pregnated with the tar and grease which is washed from the fleeces of the sheep; another, that it is as much owing to the dung from their hind-quarters, as the greasy tar is not incorporated with the water, but floats, like a rainbow-coloured film, on the surface; and a third says they are gorged with the ticks and vermin which are dislodged from the fleece in the washing. To this last opinion I am inclined to give very little credit; but I think the trout may be disordered by the joint effects of the greasy tar and dung, and alarmed by the disturbance in different parts of the stream. I have seen the scum of the tar by the side of the stream, in considerable quantity, ten days after the sheep-washing was over. A good spate, however, seldom fails to cure the trout and restore their appetite. I saw an instance of sick trout this year, but not in consequence of sheep-washing. It was in a stream which was much swollen from a heavy rain the day before, and the water was very much discoloured and thick, as if a newly-ploughed field had been overflowed and the soil washed away, or as if a bank of earth had fallen in. The water was by no means so high as I have frequently seen it, but in mid-channel it was almost black; and shoals of small trout crowded to the sides, so weak and helpless,—wabbling about as if they were fuddled,—that you might take them out with your hands.

SIMPSON.—I do not think that this has been a very good season for fly-fishing anywhere. A friend



of mine in Herefordshire informs me that there has been a deficiency of sport in that part of the country, and he complains much of the rivers being netted by poachers.

FISHER.—The same may be said of some of the best trout streams in Yorkshire and Westmoreland. The Eure, the Ribble, the Lune, the Lowther, the Esk, and the Eamont, have not afforded average sport this season, as I can testify, both from my own experience and that of others. Some of them have been completely dragged with nets for miles; and I have seen the waters of more than one of them of a chalky colour for several days, and fish lying dead by their sides, from the more destructive practice of liming. Should these practices be continued, fly-fishers will have no option but to emigrate, and leave the fair but troutless streams of England for the rivers and lochs of Connemara, or for the virgin waters of the middle and northern States of America, where never yet trout were deluded by the gay deceivers of O'Shaughnessey, Chevalier, or Widow Phun. Ungrateful country! thou wilt mourn the loss of thy kindest children too late, when thou hearest of them extending civilization, and introducing a knowledge of the gentle art among the wild men of Galway, or the red man that dwell by Lake Huron, when no longer the trout leaps in thy streams, and when no more the angler's reel is heard sounding on their banks. The gigantic trout of Lake Huron,



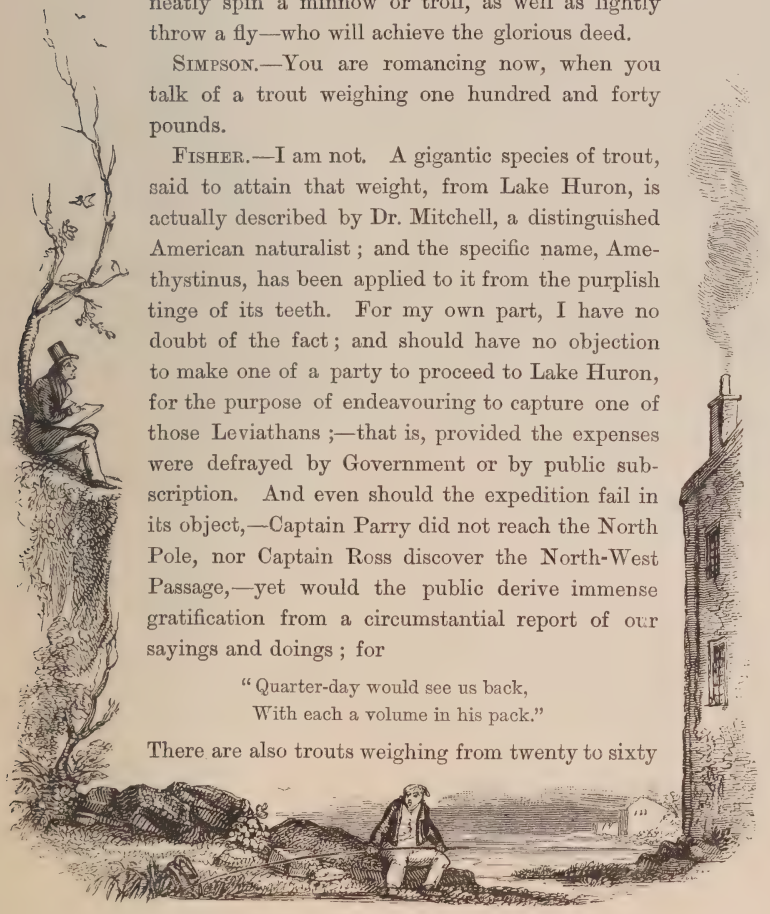
(Salmo Amethystinus,) weighing one hundred and forty pounds, has never yet been captured by a native angler,—red man, or Yankee;—and if ever he be captured, it is a native of the British Isles, skilled in all the mysteries of the art—who can neatly spin a minnow or troll, as well as lightly throw a fly—who will achieve the glorious deed.

SIMPSON.—You are romancing now, when you talk of a trout weighing one hundred and forty pounds.

FISHER.—I am not. A gigantic species of trout, said to attain that weight, from Lake Huron, is actually described by Dr. Mitchell, a distinguished American naturalist; and the specific name, Amethystinus, has been applied to it from the purplish tinge of its teeth. For my own part, I have no doubt of the fact; and should have no objection to make one of a party to proceed to Lake Huron, for the purpose of endeavouring to capture one of those Leviathans;—that is, provided the expenses were defrayed by Government or by public subscription. And even should the expedition fail in its object,—Captain Parry did not reach the North Pole, nor Captain Ross discover the North-West Passage,—yet would the public derive immense gratification from a circumstantial report of our sayings and doings; for

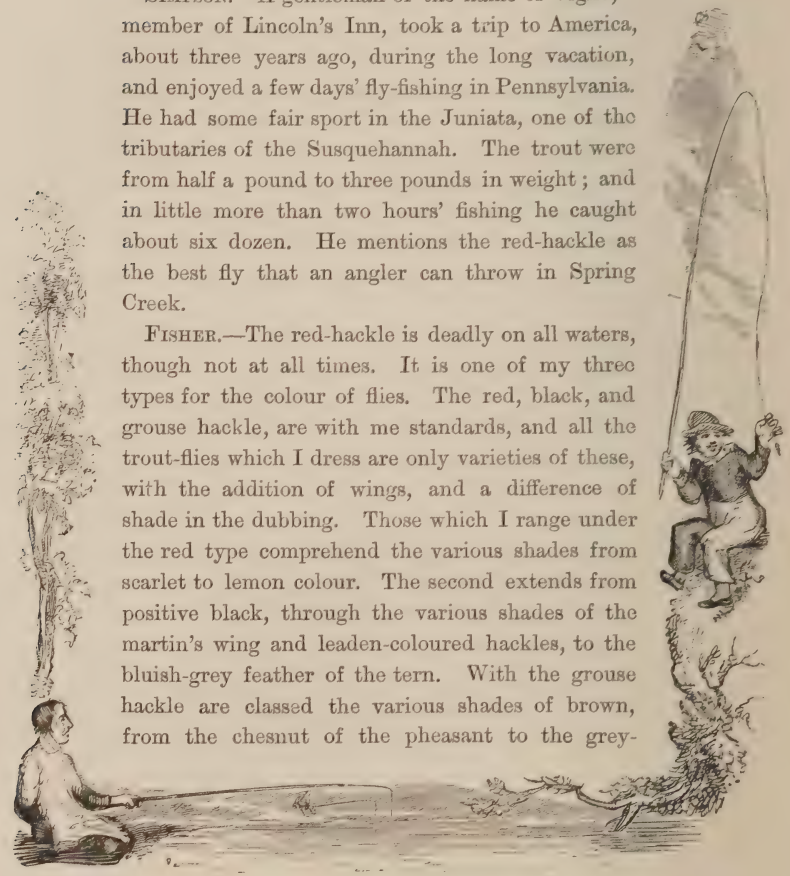
> "Quarter-day would see us back,
> With each a volume in his pack."

There are also trouts weighing from twenty to sixty



pounds in Lake Michigan ; and some of the weight of ninety pounds are said to have been taken in the straits of Michilimackinack—a name well worthy of a ninety pounder—which connect Lake Huron with Lake Michigan.

SIMPSON.—A gentleman of the name of Vigne, a member of Lincoln's Inn, took a trip to America, about three years ago, during the long vacation, and enjoyed a few days' fly-fishing in Pennsylvania. He had some fair sport in the Juniata, one of the tributaries of the Susquehannah. The trout were from half a pound to three pounds in weight ; and in little more than two hours' fishing he caught about six dozen. He mentions the red-hackle as the best fly that an angler can throw in Spring Creek.



FISHER.—The red-hackle is deadly on all waters, though not at all times. It is one of my three types for the colour of flies. The red, black, and grouse hackle, are with me standards, and all the trout-flies which I dress are only varieties of these, with the addition of wings, and a difference of shade in the dubbing. Those which I range under the red type comprehend the various shades from scarlet to lemon colour. The second extends from positive black, through the various shades of the martin's wing and leaden-coloured hackles, to the bluish-grey feather of the tern. With the grouse hackle are classed the various shades of brown, from the chesnut of the pheasant to the grey-

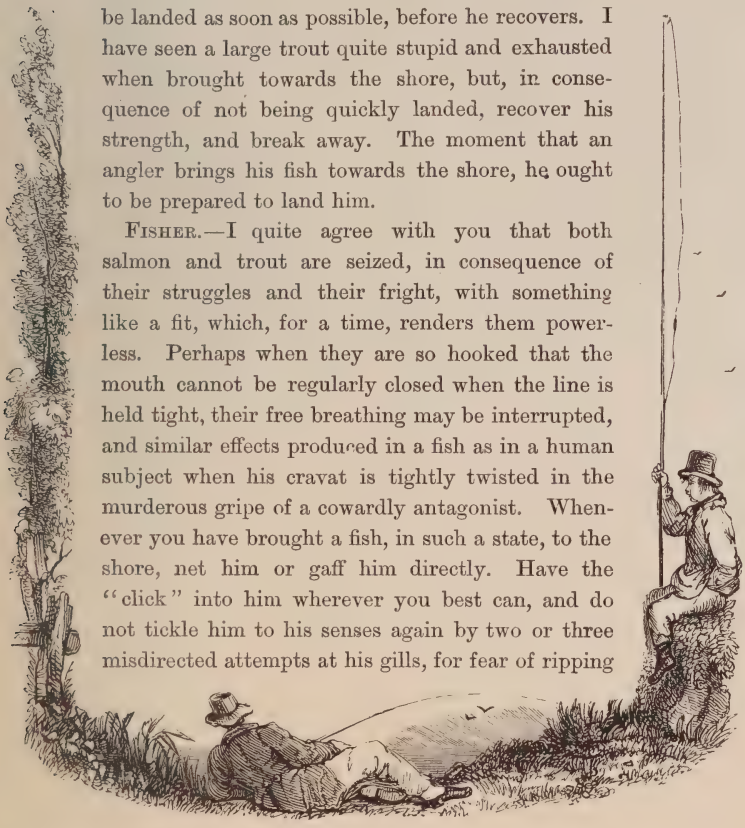
brown of the partridge. With the last I also place my flies with speckled wings, from the May-fly to the grey drake and feathers of the Guinea-fowl. In conformity with this arrangement, my fly-book consists of three principal divisions, each of which again consists of two compartments, one for hackles proper, and the other for winged flies; and I can turn to the colour and suit myself with a hook of the size wanted with the greatest facility.

TWEDDELL.—I have known some gentlemen who were seldom successful in taking many trout, though their assortment of flies was most extensive. They have wanted perseverance, and have wasted their time and lost their patience in fiddle-faddling and changing their flies, when they should have kept fishing on. I seldom change my flies after beginning to fish, in a stream which I am well acquainted with, though I may sometimes keep walking and throwing for two or three hours, and scarcely catching so many fish. I have, notwithstanding, continued using the same flies—because I was satisfied I could put on none more likely—till I found the fish in a humour to feed; and have filled my creel, when others less persevering, but who had perhaps tried a dozen different flies, walked home with their creels toom. I do not think it a good plan for an angler always to be adding flies to a stock which he is not likely to use up for years. In looking over a large book of flies, belonging to a gentleman who prided himself on their number and

variety, I have found many moth-eaten and not fit for use. An excellent fly-fisher of my acquaintance generally carries his whole stock in the two pockets of an old Scots' Almanack, with two or three links of salmon-flies between the leaves. There is one of the salmon-flies which he shows as a trophy. It is rather a plain-looking one, with a yellowish-brown coloured body, brown wings of a bittern's feather, with a blood-red hackle for legs, and the link of a pepper and salt mixture, formed of five black and five white horse-hairs. With this fly he killed, in one day, five salmon, the last of which weighed twenty-five pounds, the largest that he had ever taken with the fly. He landed this last salmon after a severe contest of upwards of an hour, during the whole of which the fish never sulked, but kept continually dashing about the pool where he was hooked, which was not more than eighty yards long, and was too shallow at its head to allow of his pushing up the stream; and the angler managed to keep his station towards the foot, to prevent his escape downwards. There is nothing like keeping a fish in constant exercise for speedily killing him. I have seen many a good fish lost by being trifled with—holding him lightly or allowing him more line than you can manage—when he contrives either to break the link or entangle the line, and escape. I never allow a salmon a slack line, and thus give him the benefit of a run, when he is almost certain to carry all



away. Every good salmon-fisher has a tolerably correct notion what strain his tackle will bear, and holds his fish with a firm, though, when required, not unyielding hand, and keeps him constantly moving. The combined effect of fear and violent exertion produces, I am inclined to think, a sort of apoplexy, or fit of stupor, in the fish; and whenever he is suspected to be in such a state he ought to be landed as soon as possible, before he recovers. I have seen a large trout quite stupid and exhausted when brought towards the shore, but, in consequence of not being quickly landed, recover his strength, and break away. The moment that an angler brings his fish towards the shore, he ought to be prepared to land him.



FISHER.—I quite agree with you that both salmon and trout are seized, in consequence of their struggles and their fright, with something like a fit, which, for a time, renders them powerless. Perhaps when they are so hooked that the mouth cannot be regularly closed when the line is held tight, their free breathing may be interrupted, and similar effects produced in a fish as in a human subject when his cravat is tightly twisted in the murderous gripe of a cowardly antagonist. Whenever you have brought a fish, in such a state, to the shore, net him or gaff him directly. Have the "click" into him wherever you best can, and do not tickle him to his senses again by two or three misdirected attempts at his gills, for fear of ripping



his side. One fish gaffed by the side is better than a dozen missed by trying for his gills. Get him by the gills, if you can, but get him however. Down on your knees as you draw him to the bank, and quickly, quietly, and firmly fix the hook of the gaff in him, and out with him, as a fisherman from Robin Hood's Bay hauls a cod from the hold of a five-man boat. Kill him directly with a few smart blows on the head, with a life-preserver, if you have one in your pocket; if not, with any stick or cobble-stone heavy enough; slip through his gills a cord, one end of which you will fasten to a bank-runner, or the stump of a tree, and throw him into the water till you want him. He will eat as firm again as he would do had you left him to die on the shore by inches,—a dreadfully protracted death to a salmon three feet long, or a human being upwards of six feet high.





SIMPSON.—I never caught a salmon in my life, though I have killed some trout which for size might be considered such. I should, however, like much to catch a few "brace" of salmon before I hang up my rod as a votive offering to the water nymphs. But it seems you cannot depend on catching salmon with the rod, however skilful, though you should fish for a month, unless you go to the west of Ireland, or the extreme north of Scotland. Sir Humphrey Davy has said "fuit" of salmon-fishing in the southern counties of Scotland; and the "Angler in Ireland" declares

that no good salmon-fishing is to be expected in Wales.

FISHER.—Then off with you next spring, either to Connemara or Inverness-shire. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" so if you have conceived an affection for salmon-fishing, let not your long-deferred wishes steal away the roses from your cheek,—you have now a colour like a peony, Simpson,—and present you with wrinkled crow-toes in exchange. As soon as the green leaves begin to appear on the quickset hedge of your garden, start by the first steamer for Aberdeen, and thence find your way as you best can to the Spey, the Ness, the Beauly, the Shinn, the Oykell, the Ainag, the Cassly, or the Carron; and if you have not sport to your satisfaction, between 10th April and 10th May, cross the country to Port-patrick, take the steamer to Donaghadee, and then set off for Connemara as fast as you can hie, and you will be there time enough to have a month's good fishing in the Costello, the Spiddle, or

"The sweet flowing river of Ballinahinch."

I should like extremely to visit Connemara myself, "the next parish to America," as the Angler in Ireland says,—

"Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore."

"With angling enraptured, at ease sitting here,
While we talk of the scenes of our fishing next year,



How the salmon we'll tempt with a neatly dressed fly
The time that will never return hastens by."

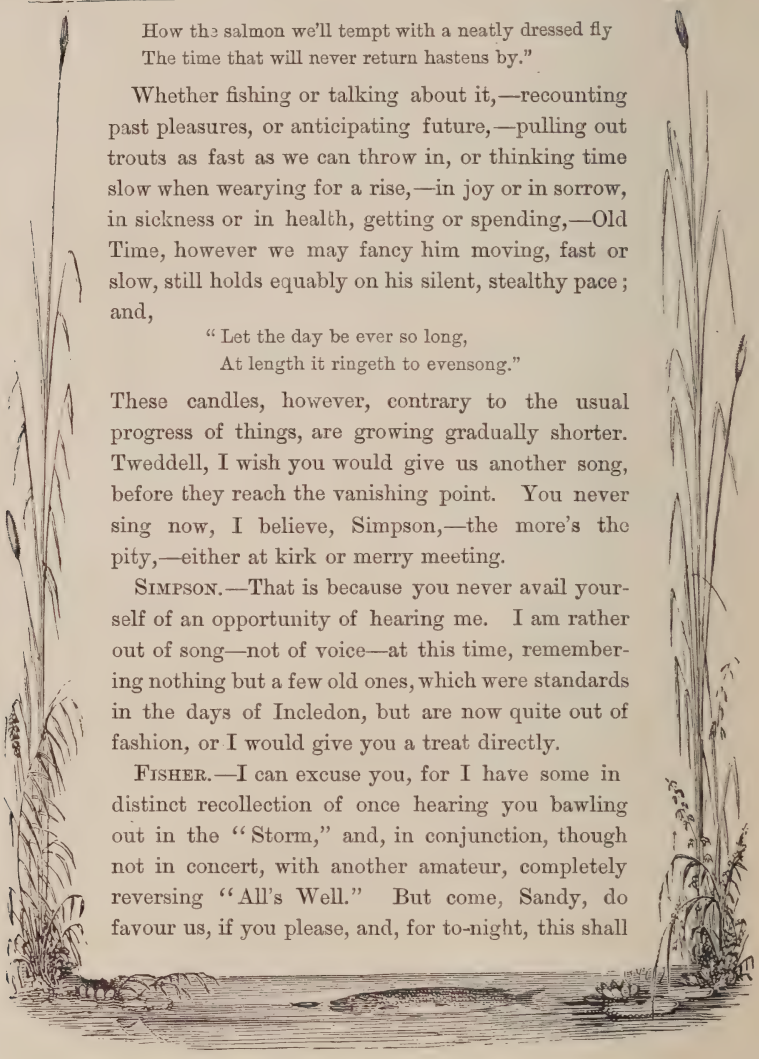
Whether fishing or talking about it,—recounting past pleasures, or anticipating future,—pulling out trouts as fast as we can throw in, or thinking time slow when wearying for a rise,—in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, getting or spending,—Old Time, however we may fancy him moving, fast or slow, still holds equably on his silent, stealthy pace; and,

"Let the day be ever so long,
At length it ringeth to evensong."

These candles, however, contrary to the usual progress of things, are growing gradually shorter. Tweddell, I wish you would give us another song, before they reach the vanishing point. You never sing now, I believe, Simpson,—the more's the pity,—either at kirk or merry meeting.

SIMPSON.—That is because you never avail yourself of an opportunity of hearing me. I am rather out of song—not of voice—at this time, remembering nothing but a few old ones, which were standards in the days of Incledon, but are now quite out of fashion, or I would give you a treat directly.

FISHER.—I can excuse you, for I have some indistinct recollection of once hearing you bawling out in the "Storm," and, in conjunction, though not in concert, with another amateur, completely reversing "All's Well." But come, Sandy, do favour us, if you please, and, for to-night, this shall

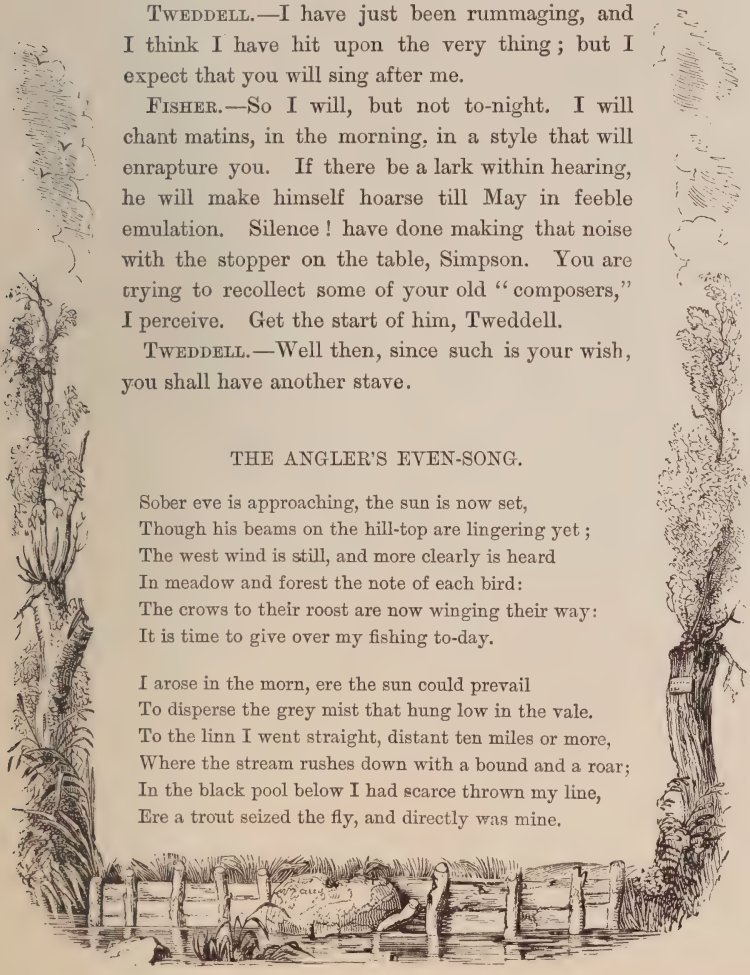


positively be "the last time of asking." Something fishy, if you have such a thing in the cupboard of your memory.

TWEDDELL.—I have just been rummaging, and I think I have hit upon the very thing; but I expect that you will sing after me.

FISHER.—So I will, but not to-night. I will chant matins, in the morning, in a style that will enrapture you. If there be a lark within hearing, he will make himself hoarse till May in feeble emulation. Silence! have done making that noise with the stopper on the table, Simpson. You are trying to recollect some of your old "composers," I perceive. Get the start of him, Tweddell.

TWEDDELL.—Well then, since such is your wish, you shall have another stave.



THE ANGLER'S EVEN-SONG.

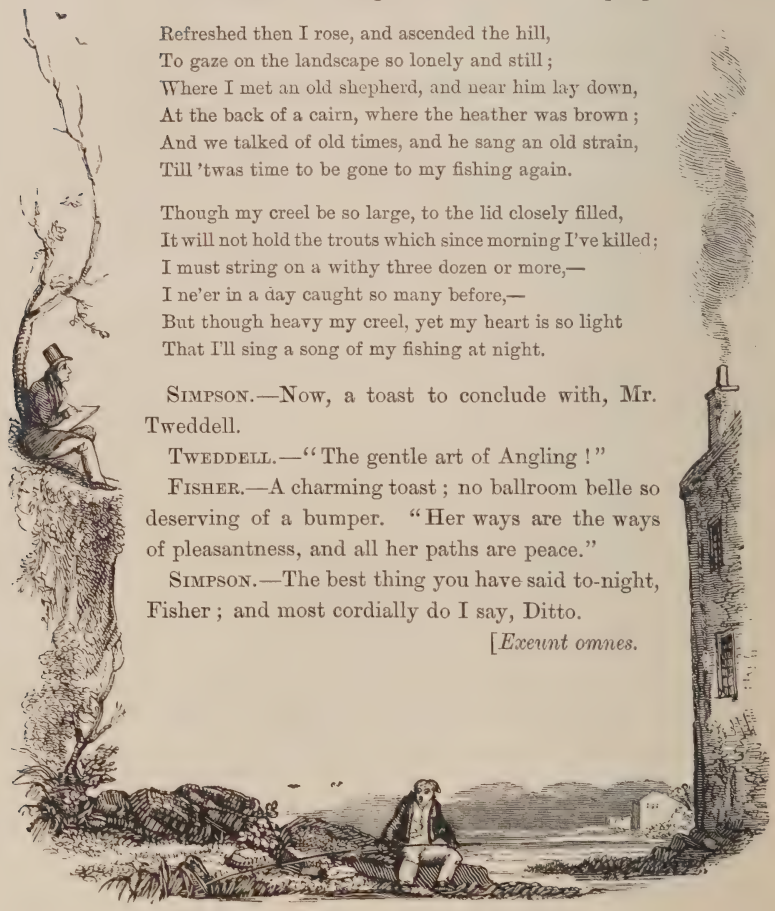
Sober eve is approaching, the sun is now set,
Though his beams on the hill-top are lingering yet;
The west wind is still, and more clearly is heard
In meadow and forest the note of each bird:
The crows to their roost are now winging their way:
It is time to give over my fishing to-day.

I arose in the morn, ere the sun could prevail
To disperse the grey mist that hung low in the vale.
To the linn I went straight, distant ten miles or more,
Where the stream rushes down with a bound and a roar;
In the black pool below I had scarce thrown my line,
Ere a trout seized the fly, and directly was mine.

How they rose, and I hooked them, 'twere needless to tell.
I fished down the stream to the lone cradle-well,
Where I sat myself down on a stone that was nigh,
(For the sun now was bright, and the trouts getting shy;)
A flask of good whisky I had not failed to bring,
And I chasten'd its strength with a dash from the spring.

Refreshed then I rose, and ascended the hill,
To gaze on the landscape so lonely and still;
Where I met an old shepherd, and near him lay down,
At the back of a cairn, where the heather was brown;
And we talked of old times, and he sang an old strain,
Till 'twas time to be gone to my fishing again.

Though my creel be so large, to the lid closely filled,
It will not hold the trouts which since morning I've killed;
I must string on a withy three dozen or more,—
I ne'er in a day caught so many before,—
But though heavy my creel, yet my heart is so light
That I'll sing a song of my fishing at night.



SIMPSON.—Now, a toast to conclude with, Mr. Tweddell.

TWEDDELL.—"The gentle art of Angling!"

FISHER.—A charming toast; no ballroom belle so deserving of a bumper. "Her ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

SIMPSON.—The best thing you have said to-night, Fisher; and most cordially do I say, Ditto.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

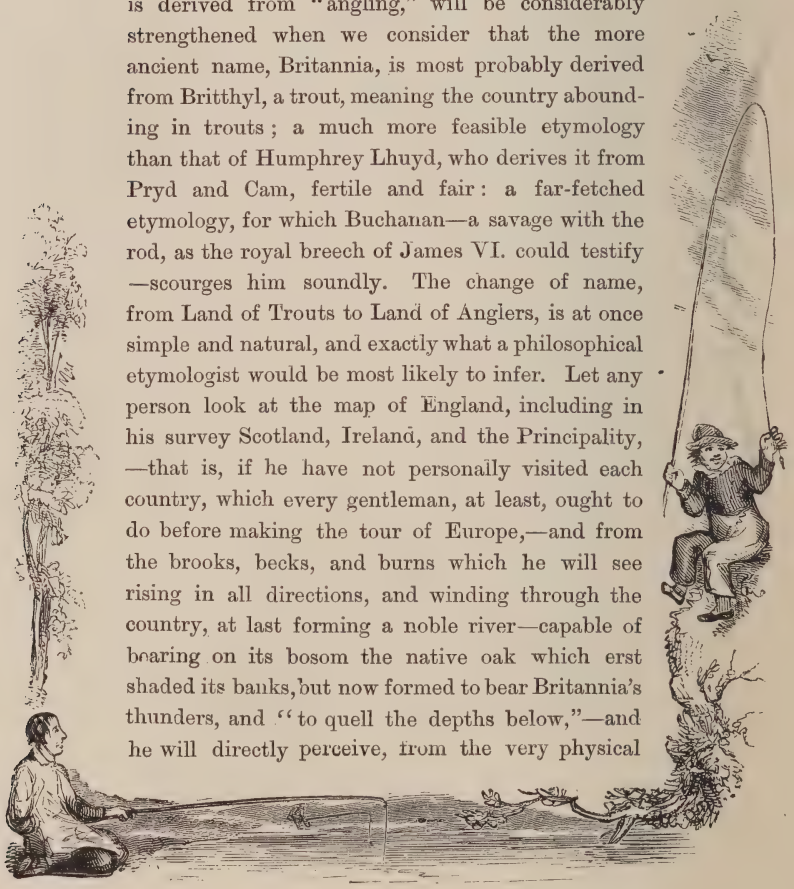




ANGLE-LAND.

NOTWITHSTANDING what learned antiquaries and historians have said about the name of England, or Angle-land, being derived from the Angles, an obscure tribe from Jutland—which, by the way, is never mentioned by our most ancient annalists as forming a considerable body of the Saxon invaders of Britain—it is not unlikely that they may all have been hunting on a false scent. The most obvious derivation is from Angling, the mystery of catching fish with rod and line; an elegant branch of the fine arts, in which the people of this country excel all other nations, and the instinctive love of which, becoming more intense in each succeeding generation, they probably derive, from an illustrious race of angling ancestors, who flourished the long rod during the Heptarchy; and from whom the seven kingdoms, when united under one crown, were called Aengle-land; a name in which all would cordially agree as peculiarly appropriate, since, from St. Michael's Mount to the Frith of Forth—which we believe was the extent of "Old" England—they were anglers all. Hence, *natio Anglia est;* and till the end of time may the love of her children towards

the gentle art, and their skill in its exercise, continue to render the name appropriate ;—for so all piscatory authors, booksellers, publishers, and tackle-makers are in duty bound to pray. The conjecture that the name Anglia, or Aengle-land, is derived from "angling," will be considerably strengthened when we consider that the more ancient name, Britannia, is most probably derived from Britthyl, a trout, meaning the country abounding in trouts ; a much more feasible etymology than that of Humphrey Lhuyd, who derives it from Pryd and Cam, fertile and fair : a far-fetched etymology, for which Buchanan—a savage with the rod, as the royal breech of James VI. could testify —scourges him soundly. The change of name, from Land of Trouts to Land of Anglers, is at once simple and natural, and exactly what a philosophical etymologist would be most likely to infer. Let any person look at the map of England, including in his survey Scotland, Ireland, and the Principality, —that is, if he have not personally visited each country, which every gentleman, at least, ought to do before making the tour of Europe,—and from the brooks, becks, and burns which he will see rising in all directions, and winding through the country, at last forming a noble river—capable of bearing on its bosom the native oak which erst shaded its banks, but now formed to bear Britannia's thunders, and "to quell the depths below,"—and he will directly perceive, from the very physical



constitution of the country, that England is peculiarly adapted to form a race of anglers. The very climate, which certain foreigners decry as being dull and cloudy, is decidedly in favour of the angler; for, notwithstanding the number and excellence of our streams, had we the clear atmosphere and cloudless skies of Italy, the fly-fisher's occupation would, in a great measure, be gone. Above all other classes of Englishmen, the fly-fisher has most reason to be satisfied with the climate of his own country; and were a course of angling to form —as it ought—a branch of liberal education, we should not have so many absentees misspending their money and their time, and losing the freshness of honest English feeling in the enervating climate and degraded society of Italy.



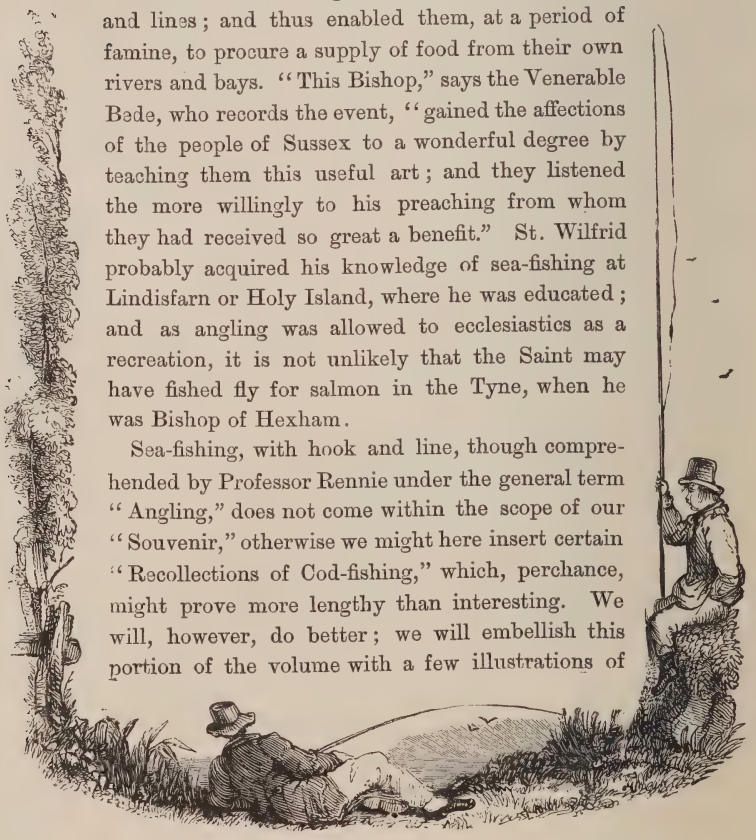
"O native Britain! O my mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks, and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being!"*

Under the term "Angling," Professor Rennie includes all kinds of fishing with a hook, in salt water as well as in fresh; and it must be admitted

* Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude."

—though the fact militates against our derivation of Anglia from "Angling"—that the people of Sussex, about 678, were so ignorant of the "gentle art," that the only fish that they knew how to catch were eels, which they probably managed to capture after the primitive fashion of "bobbing" with a pottle of hay. St. Wilfrid, however, taught them the art of fishing with nets, and with hooks and lines; and thus enabled them, at a period of famine, to procure a supply of food from their own rivers and bays. "This Bishop," says the Venerable Bede, who records the event, "gained the affections of the people of Sussex to a wonderful degree by teaching them this useful art; and they listened the more willingly to his preaching from whom they had received so great a benefit." St. Wilfrid probably acquired his knowledge of sea-fishing at Lindisfarn or Holy Island, where he was educated; and as angling was allowed to ecclesiastics as a recreation, it is not unlikely that the Saint may have fished fly for salmon in the Tyne, when he was Bishop of Hexham.

Sea-fishing, with hook and line, though comprehended by Professor Rennie under the general term "Angling," does not come within the scope of our "Souvenir," otherwise we might here insert certain "Recollections of Cod-fishing," which, perchance, might prove more lengthy than interesting. We will, however, do better; we will embellish this portion of the volume with a few illustrations of

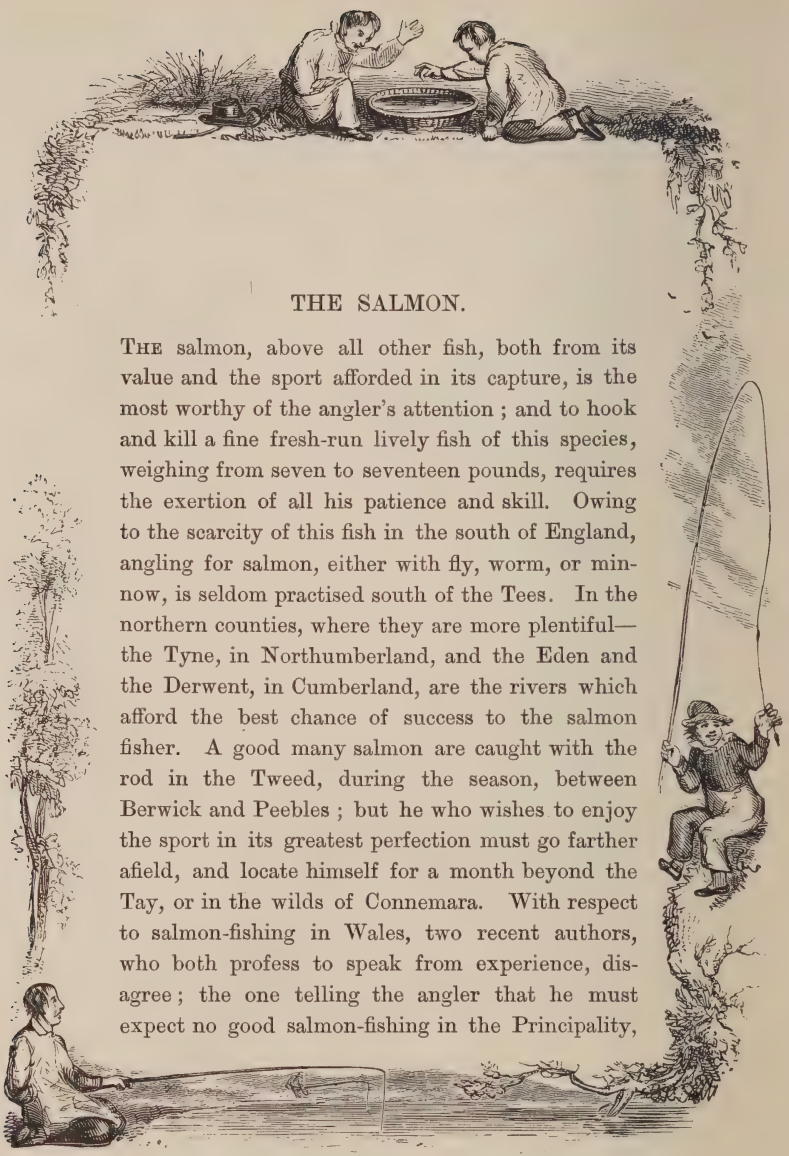


coast scenery, which can scarcely fail of exciting most pleasing seaside reminiscences. Behold the joint effect of Topham's pencil and Beckwith's burin, and read the description of Crabbe :

"Turn to the watery world !—but who to thee
(A wonder yet unviewed) shall paint—the Sea ?
Various and vast, sublime in all its forms,
When lulled by zephyrs, or when roused by storms,
Its colours changing, when from clouds and sun
Shades after shades upon the surface run ;
Embrowned and horrid now, and now serene,
In limpid blue and evanescent green ;
And oft the foggy banks on ocean lie,
Lift the far sail, and cheat th' experienced eye

Be it the summer noon ; a sandy space
The ebbing tide has left upon its place ;
Then just the hot and stony beach above
Light twinkling streams in bright confusion move ;
(For heated thus, the warmer air ascends
And with the cooler in its fall contends.)
Then the broad bosom of the ocean keeps
An equal motion ; swelling as it sleeps,
Then slowly sinking, curling to the strand,
Faint lazy waves o'ercreep the ridgy sand,
Or tap the tarry boat with gentle blow,
And back return in silence, smooth and slow.
Ships in the calm seem anchored ; for they glide
On the still sea, urged solely by the tide."





THE SALMON.

The salmon, above all other fish, both from its value and the sport afforded in its capture, is the most worthy of the angler's attention; and to hook and kill a fine fresh-run lively fish of this species, weighing from seven to seventeen pounds, requires the exertion of all his patience and skill. Owing to the scarcity of this fish in the south of England, angling for salmon, either with fly, worm, or minnow, is seldom practised south of the Tees. In the northern counties, where they are more plentiful—the Tyne, in Northumberland, and the Eden and the Derwent, in Cumberland, are the rivers which afford the best chance of success to the salmon fisher. A good many salmon are caught with the rod in the Tweed, during the season, between Berwick and Peebles; but he who wishes to enjoy the sport in its greatest perfection must go farther afield, and locate himself for a month beyond the Tay, or in the wilds of Connemara. With respect to salmon-fishing in Wales, two recent authors, who both profess to speak from experience, disagree; the one telling the angler that he must expect no good salmon-fishing in the Principality,

while the other represents it as excellent in more streams than any angler—who commences salmon-fishing when he comes of age, and hangs up his rod when about seventy, devoting three months in each year to the sport, and fishing each stream thoroughly—can hope to get through in his life-time.

"'Tis really painful here to see
Experienced doctors disagree."

Fresh-run salmon—that is, clean fish from the sea—begin, in small numbers, to enter most rivers in the north of England and in the south of Scotland, about January, if the season be mild; their numbers increasing during the spring months. In severe winters, and when the streams are full from the melting of the snow, their appearance is proportionately delayed, as the salmon has an aversion to snow broth. In some rivers their appearance is from a month to six weeks later than in others; and there are streams which they never enter till April, though they ascend others which discharge themselves into the same estuary in January.

The advance-guard of the main body of salmon begin to ascend above the tideway about March in early rivers, and enter the fresh water; and during this and the three succeeding months of April, May, and June is the best time for angling for salmon within ten or twelve miles of the highest point of the river to which the tide flows. About July they begin to push up towards the

higher parts of the river, and now enter its smaller subsidiary streams, gradually ascending towards their sources, during the months of August, September, and October, as floods afford them opportunity of passing the falls, weirs, and shallows. Should the weather be frosty, the early fish commonly begin spawning in November, though the greater number spawn in December and January. Grilse, the young of the salmon,—which descend as smouts or salmon-fry from the spawning ground to the sea in April and May,—return to the rivers about the middle of June; and again descend to the sea in September. Grilse, which on their first appearance weigh from two to four pounds, and increase during their abode in fresh water to six or seven, take a smaller kind of salmon-fly, dressed on a hook, No. 4, 5, or 6, according to the state of the water. They may also be angled for with lob-worms, a minnow, or a par's tail.

Salmon, in ascending a river, mostly keep in the middle of the stream, avoiding the shore, and seldom making any stay in pools or weils which are much shaded either with steep rocky banks or trees. They are most likely to be found a little below weirs and falls, and towards the head of large pools. As salmon never, or at least very rarely, rise at the fly when the water is clear and unruffled, the angler need not be apprehensive of disturbing them by wading; for when the water is in such a state as to afford him the greatest

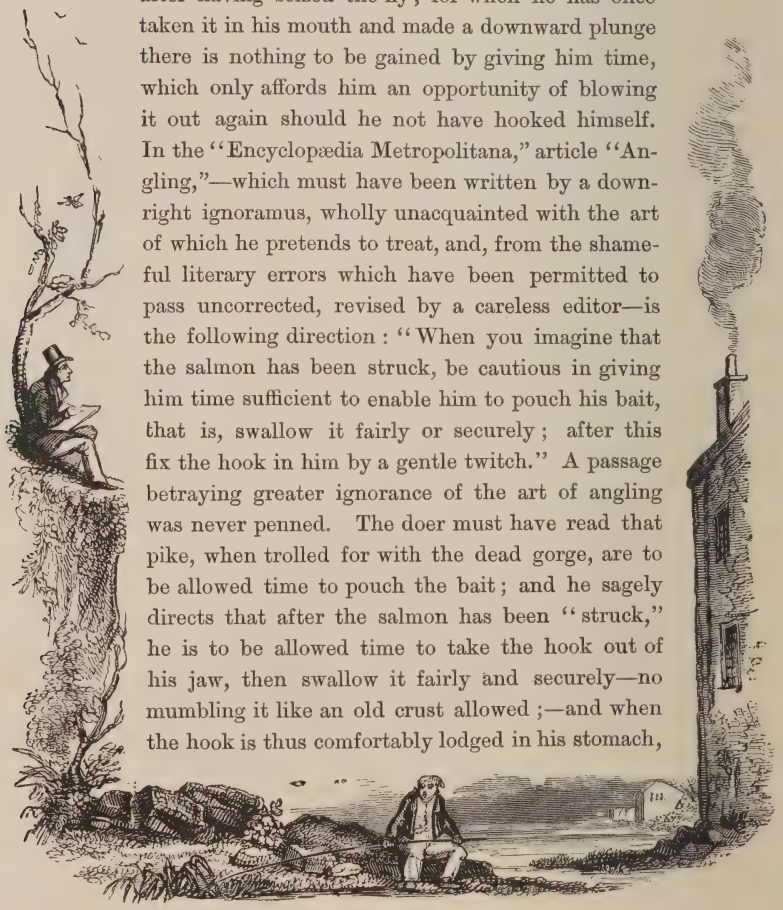


chance of success, they will not be very likely to notice him at the distance of twenty yards. When the angler knows that salmon are in a pool, he must not be content with making two or three casts, as directed by mere book-makers, who probably may never have seen a salmon caught, but fish the pool diligently again and again, making his casts frequent; and should he not succeed with one fly, try another of a different shade.

In dull weather, when uniformly dark hazy clouds are impending, and the barometer points steadily to rain, both salmon and trout generally decline taking any kind of bait or flies, whatever may be the state of the water. On such days, the angler may save himself the trouble of going to the water-side—except for the sake of exercise—as he may much more profitably employ himself at his inn, if he be merely a temporary sojourner, in dressing a few flies, looking over his tackle or his linen, or writing to his male and female friends, cramming the former with accounts of the loads of salmon and trout which he has caught—in his dreams; and soothing the ladies—maids, wives, and widows, who are disconsolately singing, from morning to night, "Oh for him back again,"—with a touch of the sentimental, either in verse or prose, accordingly as he may be "i' the vein."

With a twenty-feet salmon rod—a twig which requires two hands, and cannot be flourished about as a gentleman switches his cane—an expert angler

will find no difficulty in casting twenty-five yards of line, if the banks of the river be clear of wood; and if the wind be direct in his favour, he will be able to cast five yards more. It is generally the safest way to strike as soon as the salmon descends after having seized the fly; for when he has once taken it in his mouth and made a downward plunge there is nothing to be gained by giving him time, which only affords him an opportunity of blowing it out again should he not have hooked himself. In the "Encyclopædia Metropolitana," article "Angling,"—which must have been written by a downright ignoramus, wholly unacquainted with the art of which he pretends to treat, and, from the shameful literary errors which have been permitted to pass uncorrected, revised by a careless editor—is the following direction: "When you imagine that the salmon has been struck, be cautious in giving him time sufficient to enable him to pouch his bait, that is, swallow it fairly or securely; after this fix the hook in him by a gentle twitch." A passage betraying greater ignorance of the art of angling was never penned. The doer must have read that pike, when trolled for with the dead gorge, are to be allowed time to pouch the bait; and he sagely directs that after the salmon has been "struck," he is to be allowed time to take the hook out of his jaw, then swallow it fairly and securely—no mumbling it like an old crust allowed;—and when the hook is thus comfortably lodged in his stomach,



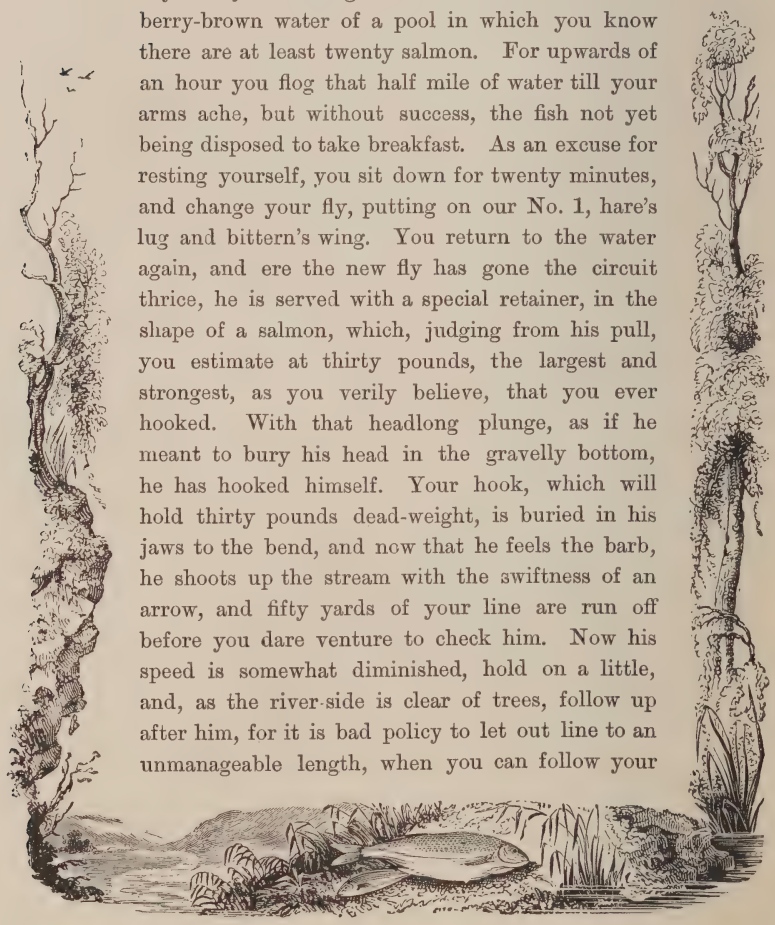
and the process of digestion is commenced, it is to be fixed, for the second and last time, by a "gentle twitch.'

The steadiness and self-possession required to manage a salmon after he is hooked; the peculiar tact with which the angler now yields to the rush of the fish, now holds hard when he appears to be growing weak, are only to be acquired by practice, as they can no more be taught by mere precept than the art of dancing on the tight-rope. To tell a novice to be steady when he has hooked a salmon for the first time—now to give him line, now to hold him in—is like telling a young ensign, who has never smelt powder but on field-days, to be cool and collected in his first battle; or a cockney not to be frightened when first a covey of partridges starts up before him, within ten yards of his nose. Favour us, gentle reader, with your patience for five minutes, while we attempt to give a sketch of salmon-fishing which will embody all the practical information on the subject of catching a salmon which we can convey; and to secure your attention the better, you shall be the hero of the tale.

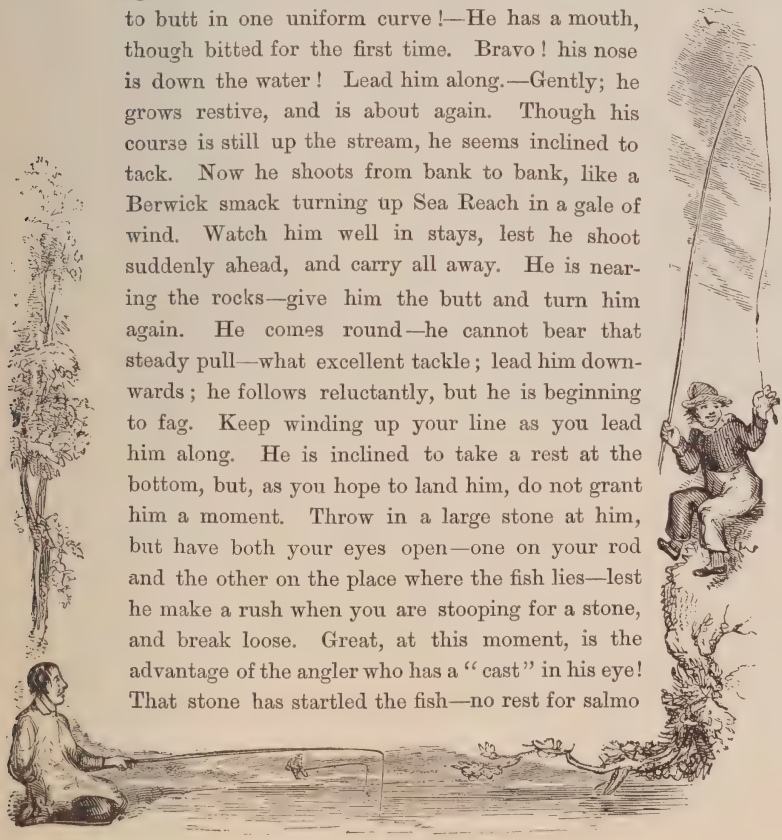
You are staying at an inn, or at a friend's house, on the banks of some river—say the Tweed, the Tyne, the Spey, or the Costello—for the sake of salmon-fishing. There has been a soaking rain of eight hours' duration on the Tuesday, which has brought the salmon up, and at six o'clock on



Thursday morning—with a pleasant breeze from the south-west, as much blue in the sky as will make trousers for every man in the Royal Navy, and a cloud occasionally shading the sun's face—your fly is making his first circuit across the berry-brown water of a pool in which you know there are at least twenty salmon. For upwards of an hour you flog that half mile of water till your arms ache, but without success, the fish not yet being disposed to take breakfast. As an excuse for resting yourself, you sit down for twenty minutes, and change your fly, putting on our No. 1, hare's lug and bittern's wing. You return to the water again, and ere the new fly has gone the circuit thrice, he is served with a special retainer, in the shape of a salmon, which, judging from his pull, you estimate at thirty pounds, the largest and strongest, as you verily believe, that you ever hooked. With that headlong plunge, as if he meant to bury his head in the gravelly bottom, he has hooked himself. Your hook, which will hold thirty pounds dead-weight, is buried in his jaws to the bend, and now that he feels the barb, he shoots up the stream with the swiftness of an arrow, and fifty yards of your line are run off before you dare venture to check him. Now his speed is somewhat diminished, hold on a little, and, as the river-side is clear of trees, follow up after him, for it is bad policy to let out line to an unmanageable length, when you can follow your



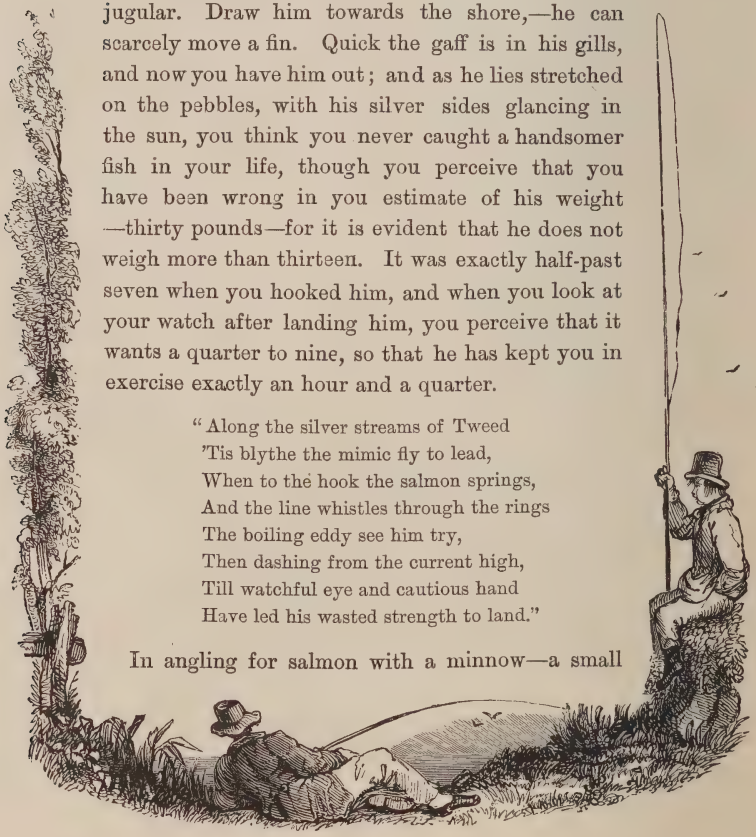
fish. There are some awkward rocks towards the head of the pool which may cut your line; turn him, therefore, as soon as you can. Now is the time to show your tact, in putting your tackle to the test without having it snapt by a sudden spring. Hold gently—ease off a little—now hold again—how beautifully the rod bends, true from top to butt in one uniform curve!—He has a mouth, though bitted for the first time. Bravo! his nose is down the water! Lead him along.—Gently; he grows restive, and is about again. Though his course is still up the stream, he seems inclined to tack. Now he shoots from bank to bank, like a Berwick smack turning up Sea Reach in a gale of wind. Watch him well in stays, lest he shoot suddenly ahead, and carry all away. He is nearing the rocks—give him the butt and turn him again. He comes round—he cannot bear that steady pull—what excellent tackle; lead him downwards; he follows reluctantly, but he is beginning to fag. Keep winding up your line as you lead him along. He is inclined to take a rest at the bottom, but, as you hope to land him, do not grant him a moment. Throw in a large stone at him, but have both your eyes open—one on your rod and the other on the place where the fish lies—lest he make a rush when you are stooping for a stone, and break loose. Great, at this moment, is the advantage of the angler who has a "cast" in his eye! That stone has startled the fish—no rest for salmo



—and now he darts to the surface. "Up wi taily," what a leap! it is well you humoured him by dipping the top of your rod, or he would have gone free. Again, and again! These are the last efforts of despair, and they have exhausted him. He is seized with stupor, like a stout gentleman who has suddenly exerted himself after dinner, or a boxer who has just received a swinging blow on the jugular. Draw him towards the shore,—he can scarcely move a fin. Quick the gaff is in his gills, and now you have him out; and as he lies stretched on the pebbles, with his silver sides glancing in the sun, you think you never caught a handsomer fish in your life, though you perceive that you have been wrong in you estimate of his weight —thirty pounds—for it is evident that he does not weigh more than thirteen. It was exactly half-past seven when you hooked him, and when you look at your watch after landing him, you perceive that it wants a quarter to nine, so that he has kept you in exercise exactly an hour and a quarter.

"Along the silver streams of Tweed
'Tis blythe the mimic fly to lead,
When to the hook the salmon springs,
And the line whistles through the rings
The boiling eddy see him try,
Then dashing from the current high,
Till watchful eye and cautious hand
Have led his wasted strength to land."

In angling for salmon with a minnow—a small



trout or brandling may be used for the same purpose—it is necessary to use a long-shanked hook, which is to be passed in at the mouth and brought out between the vent and the tail; and, to prevent the bait slipping down this hook, a small hook, whipped on a piece of fine gut about three inches long, is to be attached to the link and passed through the minnow's lips. To facilitate the spinning of the minnow, it is usual to employ two swivels, one at the junction of your first and second length of gut, and the other at the junction of the second and third, with a shot, greater or smaller according to the strength of the current, placed on the gut, immediately above each swivel, to keep the minnow down in the water. In spinning a minnow, the foot-length, of gut, is generally about three yards long. Some anglers use a conical piece of lead, with a hole at the apex, for the gut to pass through, which they slide down over the minnow's nose; but this method has not any advantage over the simpler one of placing shot above the swivels. The manner of using this bait is to cast it across the stream, and, as you draw it towards you, to keep it playing by a slight motion of the rod.

In fishing for salmon with lob-worms, two or three, according to their size, ought to be placed upon the hook, which ought to be cast up the stream and worked gently down with the current, according to the strength of which the line is to be shotted. When spinning a minnow, or fishing with



the worm for salmon, it is customary to use a stiffer top-piece than in fishing fly. When a salmon is hooked by either of the former methods, he is to be managed in the same manner as in fly-fishing. There is no rod or tackle that we have ever seen which will enable an angler to throw a salmon of twenty pounds weight over his head, as he would whisk out a trout when shade-fishing. The best time of the day for salmon-fishing is from six in the morning till eleven in the forenoon, and from four in the afternoon till dusk ; but when the water and weather are favourable, they may be angled for at any hour between sunrise and sunset. The angler who in one day has the skill and good fortune to land four salmon, each upwards of seven pounds, though he may have toiled for them from dawn till evening, has no just cause to grumble, and to represent the water as not worth fishing. An amateur angler, who has thrice in the course of ten years taken eight salmon in one day, is entitled to give a minute detail of each day's proceedings, and catch his salmon over again, in all companies, social, philosophical, or literary. Before taking leave of the salmon, we beg to correct an error of the press in the second series of Mr. Jesse's interesting "Gleanings," of which, compared with the "harvesting" of some others, it may be said that "the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer." It is there stated, page 305, that "the ovarium of a salmon will pro-

duce 20,000,000 ova." This requires correction, by cutting off the three last ciphers, and making the number 20,000 instead of 20,000,000. Twenty millions of the ova of a salmon ready to spawn would weigh about four hundred pounds. The number of ova in salmon is, according to the size of the fish, from fifteen to twenty-five thousand.



SHADE-FISHING FOR TROUT.

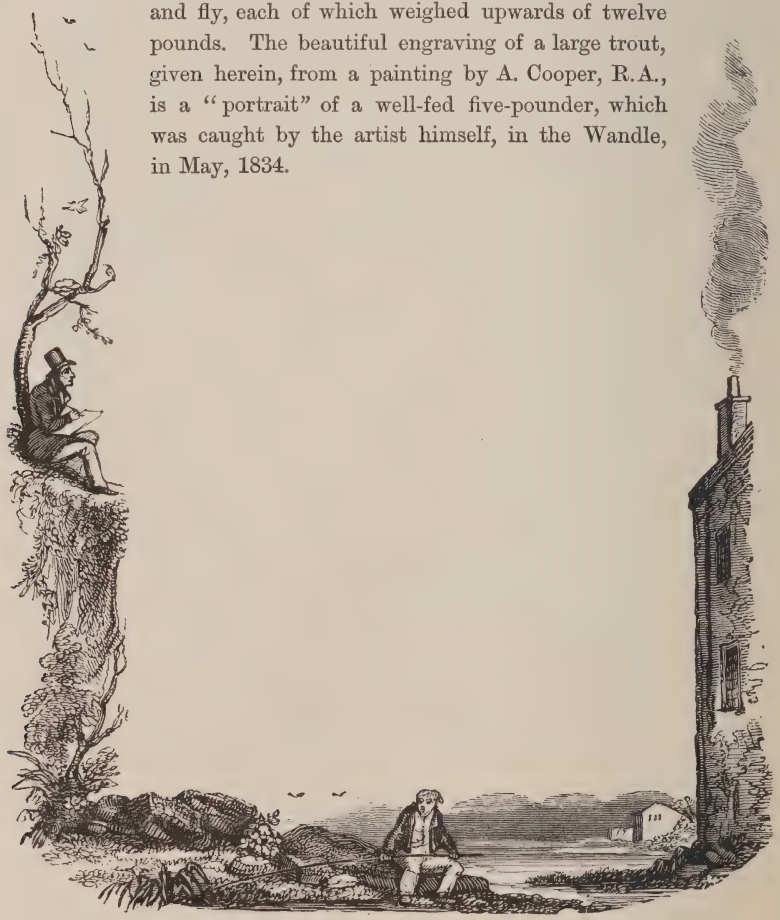
An angler who wishes to obtain a dish of trouts will not wait till they are inclined to take the artificial fly, provided he can fairly hook them by availing himself of other means. In days when the water is clear and smooth—not a breeze stirring to curl its surface—and when there is not the slightest chance of success with the artificial fly, the shade-fisher will not unfrequently bring home a dozen or two of good trouts. In shade-fishing, the angler ought to use a stiff rod and a line strong enough to lift out a trout the moment he is struck; and for bait we know nothing better than gentles. The best situations for practising this method of angling are the banks of streams shaded by trees and bushes that conceal the angler from the sight of the trouts which are taking their ease in the pool below, leisurely opening their mouths and plying their gills as if between sleeping and waking. Having put a couple of gentles on his hook, let the angler warily make his way through the bushes, and project his rod as imperceptibly as the motion of the shadow on the dial; and drop his hook as gently as a caterpillar lowers himself from the branch of a

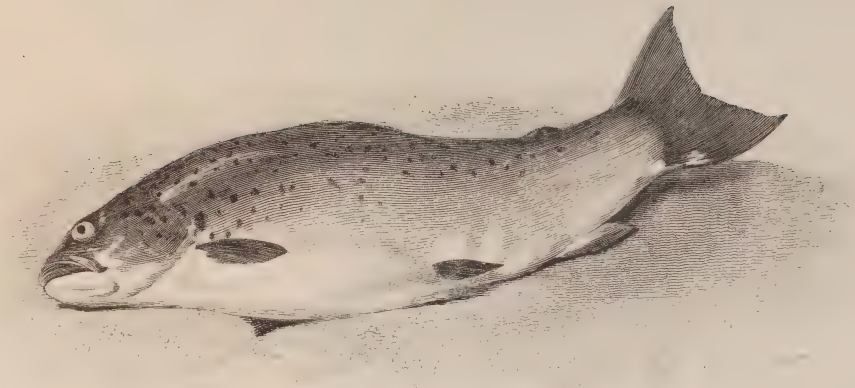
lime-tree to the ground. A fine portly-looking trout, who would not spring at the most tempting fly, as requiring too much exertion, skulls himself, with two or three gentle strokes of his tail, towards the dainty morsel, which he tips over as you, gentle reader, would an oyster; and, just as he is descending, he feels a slight tickling in his throat; and before he can ascertain the cause, he finds himself in another element, flying like a bird through the alders that shade his native stream.

In clear water it is sometimes advantageous, when there is a light breeze, to use two natural flies, with a fine line, putting a small hook through them, under the wings, so that they may lie with their heads in opposite directions, and allowing them to be lightly blown across the stream, or carried down with the current. When using the blowing line, it is necessary to employ a reel. Worms, either lob or brandling, are an excellent bait for trout when the water is rather discoloured; and even when it is clear trout will frequently take the worm in streamy parts of a river or a burn, when they will not take the fly. When worms are used, the bait is to be thrown up the stream, and worked gradually downwards to the extent of the angler's line.

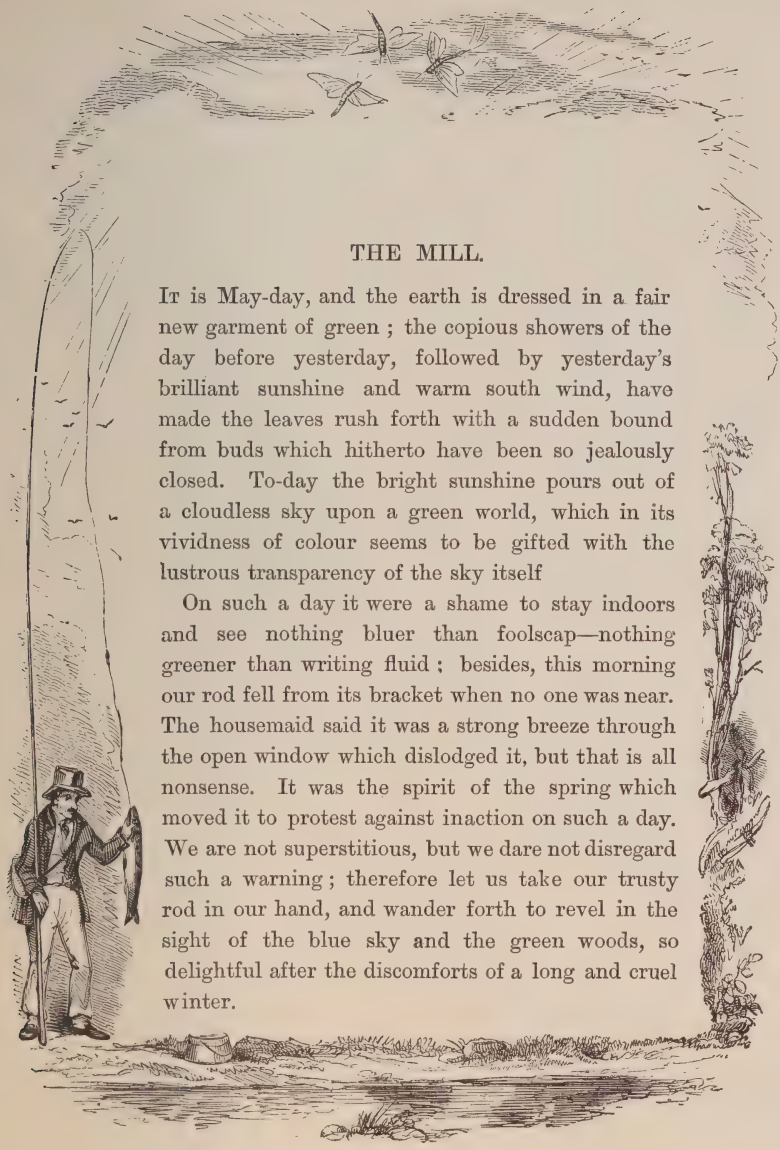
In swift-running streams, the fresh-water or burn trout seldom attains to the weight of five pounds; and in such streams, in the north of England and in Scotland, by far the greater number of trouts

caught weigh less than half a pound each. In the Thames, between Teddington and Windsor, very large fresh-water trouts are sometimes caught. Within the last twelve months three have been caught, two with the net, and one with the rod and fly, each of which weighed upwards of twelve pounds. The beautiful engraving of a large trout, given herein, from a painting by A. Cooper, R.A., is a "portrait" of a well-fed five-pounder, which was caught by the artist himself, in the Wandle, in May, 1834.





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THE MILL.

It is May-day, and the earth is dressed in a fair new garment of green ; the copious showers of the day before yesterday, followed by yesterday's brilliant sunshine and warm south wind, have made the leaves rush forth with a sudden bound from buds which hitherto have been so jealously closed. To-day the bright sunshine pours out of a cloudless sky upon a green world, which in its vividness of colour seems to be gifted with the lustrous transparency of the sky itself

On such a day it were a shame to stay indoors and see nothing bluer than foolscap—nothing greener than writing fluid ; besides, this morning our rod fell from its bracket when no one was near. The housemaid said it was a strong breeze through the open window which dislodged it, but that is all nonsense. It was the spirit of the spring which moved it to protest against inaction on such a day. We are not superstitious, but we dare not disregard such a warning ; therefore let us take our trusty rod in our hand, and wander forth to revel in the sight of the blue sky and the green woods, so delightful after the discomforts of a long and cruel winter.

Whither shall we go? What need to ask?—there is but one stream in the verdant valley, and wherever we strike it our steps are sure to be irresistibly led, upwards or downwards as the case may be, to the mill, which for a century has nestled among the great trees in the heart of the valley, and has been so frequented by angling visitors that it has earned the name of the Angler's Paradise.

Our way lies over meadows yellow with the low-flowered celandine, the taller and more kingly buttercups, and scattered clumps of nodding cowslips. It is a field of cloth of gold, the whole of this low ground; but in lieu of gaudily bedecked knights and horses, there are only our sober selves clad in homely grey, and red and white satin-flanked cows, to view its loveliness.

The hedges look like the spray of a waterfall turned into emeralds, and set with pearly foam of the blossoming thorns. On the uppermost branch of a tall hazel clump a thrush is singing with all his heart, his fawn-coloured throat throbbing with the music of his voice; while not far off, his mate is sitting on her blue eggs, and listening proudly to his epithalamium.

In the pauses of his song you can hear another and a merrier one, dropping faintly down from that speck in the dazzling blue, which you know to be a lark.

Ah, there, too, is the first swallow skimming



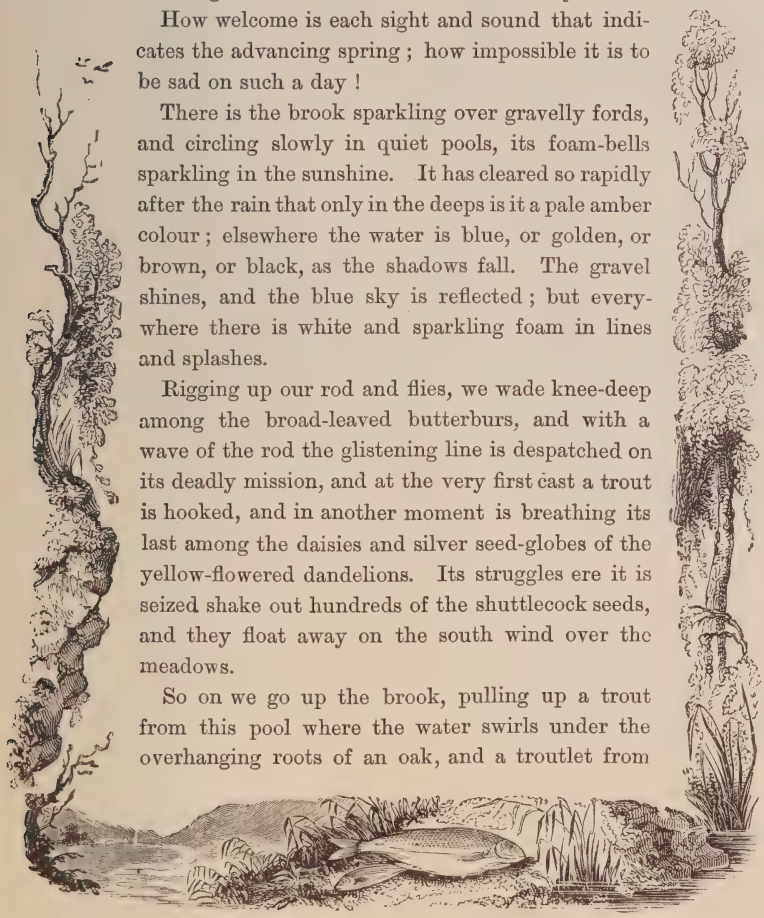
over that still pool, on which the white ranunculus flowers lie in such perfect purity; and hark! was that a cuckoo? or was it but a dove, whose voice is so tremulous with the happiness of his recent wedding that his coo-o is broken into two syllables?

How welcome is each sight and sound that indicates the advancing spring; how impossible it is to be sad on such a day!

There is the brook sparkling over gravelly fords, and circling slowly in quiet pools, its foam-bells sparkling in the sunshine. It has cleared so rapidly after the rain that only in the deeps is it a pale amber colour; elsewhere the water is blue, or golden, or brown, or black, as the shadows fall. The gravel shines, and the blue sky is reflected; but everywhere there is white and sparkling foam in lines and splashes.

Rigging up our rod and flies, we wade knee-deep among the broad-leaved butterburs, and with a wave of the rod the glistening line is despatched on its deadly mission, and at the very first cast a trout is hooked, and in another moment is breathing its last among the daisies and silver seed-globes of the yellow-flowered dandelions. Its struggles ere it is seized shake out hundreds of the shuttlecock seeds, and they float away on the south wind over the meadows.

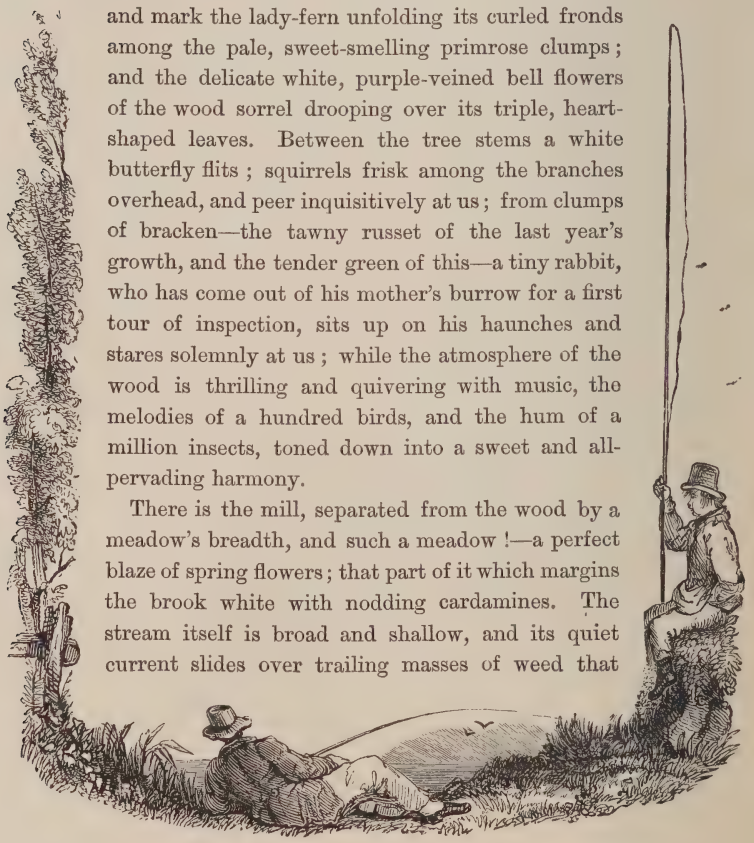
So on we go up the brook, pulling up a trout from this pool where the water swirls under the overhanging roots of an oak, and a troutlet from



that merrily rippling shallow. Although the water is just the right colour, the sun is too bright for very good sport, but we like the bright sunshine, and the additional pleasure it gives to our waterside ramble more than atones for a lighter basket.

Now we enter a wood, where the oaks and the alders crowd too thickly over the stream for us to fish it. We stroll quietly along the mossy glades, and mark the lady-fern unfolding its curled fronds among the pale, sweet-smelling primrose clumps; and the delicate white, purple-veined bell flowers of the wood sorrel drooping over its triple, heart-shaped leaves. Between the tree stems a white butterfly flits; squirrels frisk among the branches overhead, and peer inquisitively at us; from clumps of bracken—the tawny russet of the last year's growth, and the tender green of this—a tiny rabbit, who has come out of his mother's burrow for a first tour of inspection, sits up on his haunches and stares solemnly at us; while the atmosphere of the wood is thrilling and quivering with music, the melodies of a hundred birds, and the hum of a million insects, toned down into a sweet and all-pervading harmony.

There is the mill, separated from the wood by a meadow's breadth, and such a meadow!—a perfect blaze of spring flowers; that part of it which margins the brook white with nodding cardamines. The stream itself is broad and shallow, and its quiet current slides over trailing masses of weed that



wave in the water like a maiden's tresses in a summer breeze.

The mill is a large, grey, irregular building—a farmhouse as well as a mill. Its massive walls are stained with age, and the ivy clothes them here and there with a mantle of glossy green. The huge, black, moss-stained wheel creaks slowly around. It is an overshot wheel, and the water pours down upon it from the sluice above in an iron-grey column, broken and changed into silver as it splashes and drips from the floats of the wheel. To the left is a broad sloping weir of great height, down which the water dashes with a thousand sparkles, and boils and bubbles in the great pool beneath, whence it is glad to slip quietly away over the sleepily waving weeds.

From beneath the wheel, the water, having done its work for the present, hurries away deep and black along a narrow channel, overhung with water docks and grasses, knotted rushes, and "water scorpions" (which, when the blue flowers smile at us we call forget-me-nots), until it rejoins its parent stream a little lower down. Here, experience has taught us, there will be a great trout lurking, and we take two of our flies off our cast, leaving only one, that they may not catch in the rushes and spoil our sport. Then creeping on hands and knees through the cool meadow grasses, we cautiously cast our fly upon the narrow torrent. At the third cast there is a quiet circle in the

water—big trouts rise leisurely—and an electric tug as we strike announces to us the pleasant fact that we have hooked a nice fish. There is not much room for him to fight, and in a few minutes we have led him into the shallow brook below, and there at last he lies upon the yellow gravel, a silver-bellied, red-spotted beauty of quite two pounds in weight.

"Ah, you rascal!" cries a voice from an upper window of the mill; "you have caught my best trout. Now just take a cast over the pool below the weir, and then come in and have some dinner. It will be ready in ten minutes. Now, no excuses—you *must* be hungry after catching such a fish."

That is the miller—a Tennysonian miller.

> "I see the wealthy miller yet,
> His double chin, his portly size,
> And who that knew him could forget
> The busy wrinkles round his eyes?
>
> The slow, wise smile that round about
> His dusty forehead drily curled,
> Seemed half within, and half without,
> And full of dealings with the world."

A heavy dinner in the middle of the day does not agree with us, but the miller would not be pleased if we declined his invitation, and we *are* hungry; so after landing another trout—a small one this time—we prop up our rod against the porch, and enter the mill.

We have a pleasant family dinner in the low-

ceilinged, oak-wainscoted dining-room, through the open windows of which a pleasant fragrance comes in from a large, old-fashioned flower garden. At one end of the table the miller presides, jovial in appearance and talk. At the other end the miller's wife is his exact prototype. We are a great favourite of hers, for because the labour of the brain gives us a somewhat pale and preoccupied look, she imagines we are delicate, and what woman can resist the pleasure of doctoring somebody? Therefore, she supplies us with fresh eggs, beautiful milk, almost solid cream, and such other country dainties which she imagines, and rightly so, we cannot get in perfection in the town. She gives us also dandelion tea, and tea made of some other herbs, notwithstanding our protestations that in town we could get something equally nasty. But in her eyes no good thing—always excepting bonnets and dresses—can come out of the town; and rarely do we pay her a visit but she insists on our taking—in her presence, mark you, for she will not accept our promise—a wineglassful of some intensely bitter decoction. Bless her heart, though! she is a dear old lady.

Then, there is the miller's eldest son, and his wife, with three or four little ones, who have already made a successful raid upon our pockets. There is no maiden "miller's daughter" here, but the youngest daughter, who was married a year ago, has now come home with her babe to "make

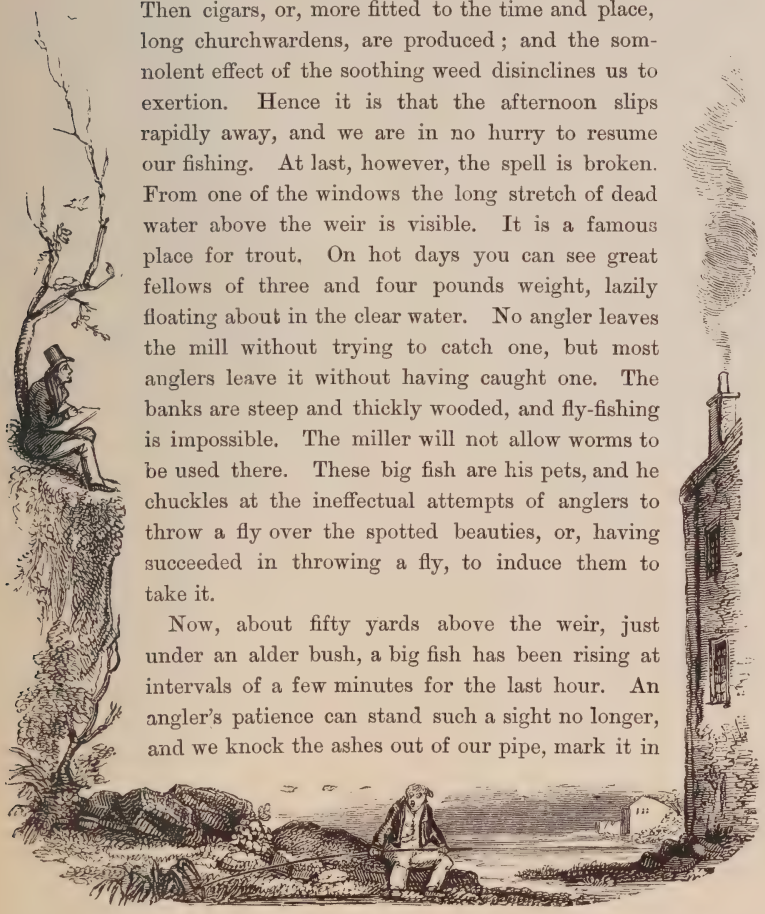


her boast" to her delighted grandpapa and grandmamma. All at the table are jolly and merry and happy, save one, the only one we have not yet mentioned. He is the miller's youngest brother, but to look at him he seems much older than the miller. He was an artist, whose pictures were beginning to sell. Then he met with a love disappointment, which upset his unstable nature. He went utterly and irredeemably to the bad; and now, half imbecile, and wearily waiting for the end, he has accepted the shelter of his brother's home. Miserable as he is, however, his artistic perceptions have not altogether left him; and now he looks more animated and happy, because he has been sitting in the shadow-flecked orchard, between the masses of white and sunlit blossoms, and has been watching the play and dance of the water as it sweeps over the weir; the thrush singing in the apple tree, the lark in the blue sky, and the gay-coloured chaffinch building its lichened nest in a fork of the splendidly blooming cherry tree. The gladness of the spring has permeated even him, and to-day his presence is less like a cloud in the sunshine of their home happiness.

Country people themselves seem to wake to a new life and cheeriness with the spring, and their cheeriness is infectious. We pity the man who has no friends in the country whom he may visit, and from whom experience such a hearty welcome that it makes him better pleased with himself. He

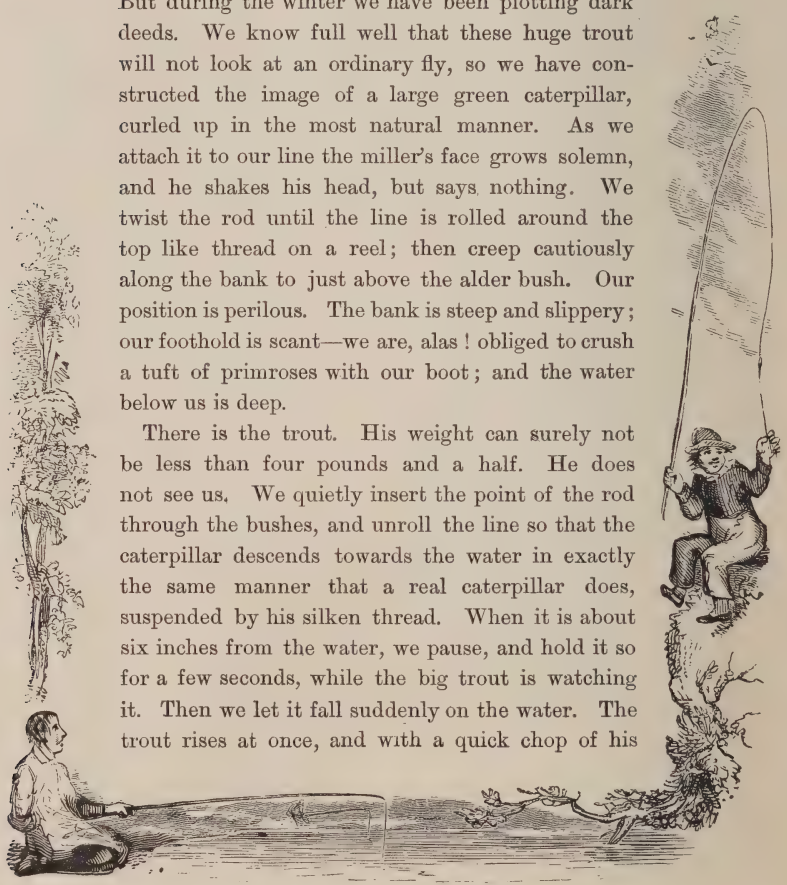
thinks he must have some merit in himself to evoke such heartiness from others.

Dinner is over, but the miller has some capital port, which it would be a shame to leave untasted, and he likes a chat with a guest from the town. Then cigars, or, more fitted to the time and place, long churchwardens, are produced; and the somnolent effect of the soothing weed disinclines us to exertion. Hence it is that the afternoon slips rapidly away, and we are in no hurry to resume our fishing. At last, however, the spell is broken. From one of the windows the long stretch of dead water above the weir is visible. It is a famous place for trout. On hot days you can see great fellows of three and four pounds weight, lazily floating about in the clear water. No angler leaves the mill without trying to catch one, but most anglers leave it without having caught one. The banks are steep and thickly wooded, and fly-fishing is impossible. The miller will not allow worms to be used there. These big fish are his pets, and he chuckles at the ineffectual attempts of anglers to throw a fly over the spotted beauties, or, having succeeded in throwing a fly, to induce them to take it.



Now, about fifty yards above the weir, just under an alder bush, a big fish has been rising at intervals of a few minutes for the last hour. An angler's patience can stand such a sight no longer, and we knock the ashes out of our pipe, mark it in

pencil with our initials that it may be kept for our use on a future occasion, lay it down reverently, and sally forth to seize our rod, the miller following with a sly smile on his ruddy face, ready to break into a ponderous laugh at our approaching defeat. But during the winter we have been plotting dark deeds. We know full well that these huge trout will not look at an ordinary fly, so we have constructed the image of a large green caterpillar, curled up in the most natural manner. As we attach it to our line the miller's face grows solemn, and he shakes his head, but says nothing. We twist the rod until the line is rolled around the top like thread on a reel; then creep cautiously along the bank to just above the alder bush. Our position is perilous. The bank is steep and slippery; our foothold is scant—we are, alas! obliged to crush a tuft of primroses with our boot; and the water below us is deep.



There is the trout. His weight can surely not be less than four pounds and a half. He does not see us. We quietly insert the point of the rod through the bushes, and unroll the line so that the caterpillar descends towards the water in exactly the same manner that a real caterpillar does, suspended by his silken thread. When it is about six inches from the water, we pause, and hold it so for a few seconds, while the big trout is watching it. Then we let it fall suddenly on the water. The trout rises at once, and with a quick chop of his



big jaws, he has the bait, and—hurrah! he is hooked. The miller's sympathies are now with the angler who has performed so redoubtable a deed. He shouts, "Hold him tight! don't let him have his head." Very good advice this, but impossible to follow, for the trout has got his head, and darts off up-stream at a racing pace, leaving diverging waves of water behind him. The line is rapidly whisked off the reel. Our heavily-bending rod tells us how futile would be the effort to check him in his mad career. The situation is critical. Our line is nearly run out. We cannot follow along the bank; the last inch is now off the reel.

"Throw your rod in after him." The advice comes too late. There is a sharp struggle forty yards up the stream; the gut gives way, and the line flies back among the bushes in sticky folds. Oh, horror!

"What to us remains of good?"

Despair! Tare and 'ouns! Frantic gesticulations and lamentations! To hook him so cleverly, and then to lose him! Hath earth any sorrow like this? The miller consoles us to the best of his ability, and offers us a pipe. His wife says a cup of tea—not dandelion—will do us good. We doubt it—our feelings are too severely lacerated—but we will try. Bless these people, how they do eat. Breakfast at half-past seven; lunch at half-past ten; dinner at one; tea at half-past four; and

supper at half-past eight. Why, at home, we only have two meals in the course of the day—breakfast and dinner, for a biscuit in the middle of the day cannot be called a meal.

Tea does console us; a pipe does also console us; and after a romp with the children in the orchard, we feel happy again, though still regretting the loss of so fine a fish.

The busy murmur of the mill ceases. The dappled cows come wading through the brook to be milked; we catch a few more small trout; the sun goes down in a sea of amber, crimson splashed and spotted; the white mists wreath around the coppices of oak and fir; the bats wheel and scream in the still air, and—we go in to supper. Then there comes a rubber or two of whist, a farewell pipe, and a glass of grog; and with a fair basketful of trout, a bottle of dandelion tea in one pocket of our coat, a spring chicken in another, and laden with a posy of cowslips and primroses gathered by the children for the dear partner of our joys and purse, we shake hands with the miller and his wife, and bid good-night to the dear old mill and its inhabitants.









AN OCTOBER MORNING.

The white mists of an October morning rise quietly and sluggishly, like a sleeper just awakened, from the damp meadows, the green hue of which is strewn and dashed with the yellow and grey of the long, dead bents and the faded summer grasses. The soft mysterious mist rolls slowly away, flowing down with glacial motion from the hollows of the wood, where the dead leaves lie in wet masses of tawny brown, and orange, and purply black. Down a narrow path between the tall, though broken and dying, bracken which hangs in dripping sadness over the soft path, we step with loitering tread, armed with our rod and creel. For what fish we on such a cool, still morn? For pike or lordly salmon? trout or dashing perch? No, the still quietude of this windless autumn morn has seemed to us to present a favourable opportunity for the capture of some of the silver-sided roach that run in the calmer reaches of the river, winding through the valley below us; the valley that only a few minutes ago was invisible from the higher ground upon which we then stood, so enveloped was it in its shroud of mist. The valley now presents a patchwork appearance, for while the natural tints



of green and yellow are visible in many a place, and the river shines with the dull gleam of frosted silver between rows of shadowy willows, yet in every dip and hollow the mist clings as loath to part from its bride of the night.

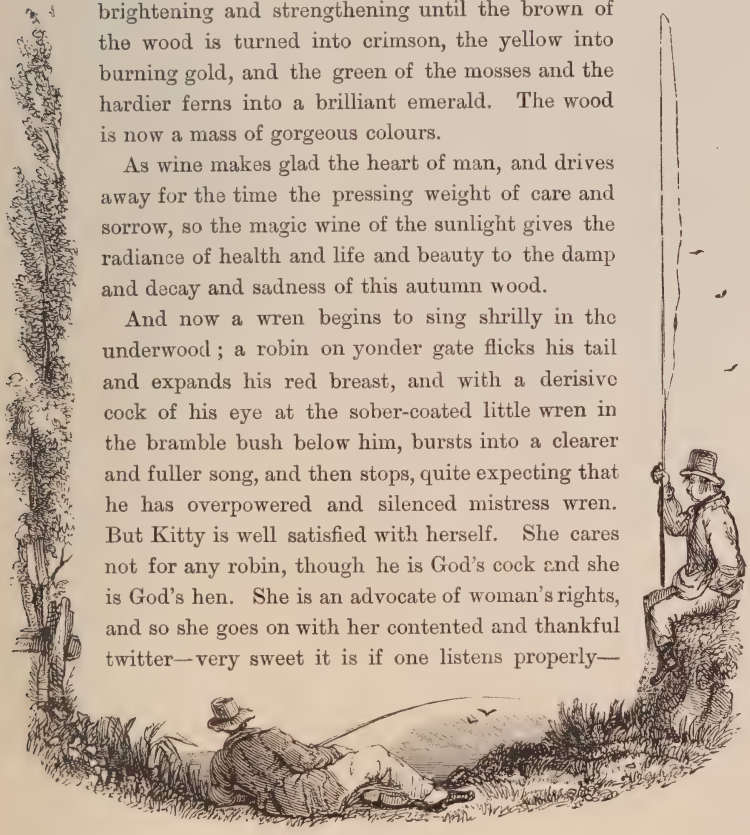
We rest for a few minutes on the crooked and lichened stile at the edge of the wood to gaze at the scene below us. It is half repellent and half attractive, yet wholly beautiful with a chaste, cold beauty. The vagueness and uncertainty imparted to the breadth of meadow by the changing mists; the indistinct outlines; the strange weird mystery of the still, white river with its curving reaches, upon which the yellow leaves of the willows float in increasing numbers, are sad and uncanny; and the low bushes with their brown branches gleaming wet with the mist, and hung with myriad water-drops, look cold and cheerless. We hesitate to leave the warmer shelter of the wood, and we look back at it with the air of one who leaves a friend for a long journey. There may be water-kelpies and elves lurking in the river valley, among the sedges and under the mantle of mist, while here in the wood there is nothing but the faint, shy rustle of the curled-up leaves as they crack from their parent branches and flutter downward into the brake and brambles, to form a thickening carpet through which the red-coated squirrel bounds with a quick patter, and the conies dash with a great flurry and disturbance of matter.



To the eastward, beyond the wood and through its sombre glades, the sky is of a pale and perfect green, but low down against the crest of the hill which shows dark and serrated upon it, it is brightening with a white light. Presently there is the dazzle of the sun above the horizon, and with a sudden attack its rays shoot through the woods, at first with a steely radiance, but quickly brightening and strengthening until the brown of the wood is turned into crimson, the yellow into burning gold, and the green of the mosses and the hardier ferns into a brilliant emerald. The wood is now a mass of gorgeous colours.

As wine makes glad the heart of man, and drives away for the time the pressing weight of care and sorrow, so the magic wine of the sunlight gives the radiance of health and life and beauty to the damp and decay and sadness of this autumn wood.

And now a wren begins to sing shrilly in the underwood; a robin on yonder gate flicks his tail and expands his red breast, and with a derisive cock of his eye at the sober-coated little wren in the bramble bush below him, bursts into a clearer and fuller song, and then stops, quite expecting that he has overpowered and silenced mistress wren. But Kitty is well satisfied with herself. She cares not for any robin, though he is God's cock and she is God's hen. She is an advocate of woman's rights, and so she goes on with her contented and thankful twitter—very sweet it is if one listens properly—



and flits about with a keen eye for things eatable, and heedless of the showers of wet she shakes upon her little brown back from the purple-streaked blackberry leaves.

And now we turn again towards the river, and, lo! the mists are fleeing hither and thither in dire confusion, and melting away before the brightness of the sun. The dewdrops look no longer cold and cheerless, but are sparkling diamond-like under the fairy wand of a sunbeam.

Now, let us delay no longer, but to our fishing! so, with well-waterproofed boots on our feet, we stride heedlessly through the soaked grass and strike the river at a favourite spot. And while we rig up our tackle—leisurely, for it is yet full early to begin—let us discourse some little of the fish we are to catch, in the manner of our honoured master the rambler by the Lea, and, we hope, to the edification of his younger disciples.

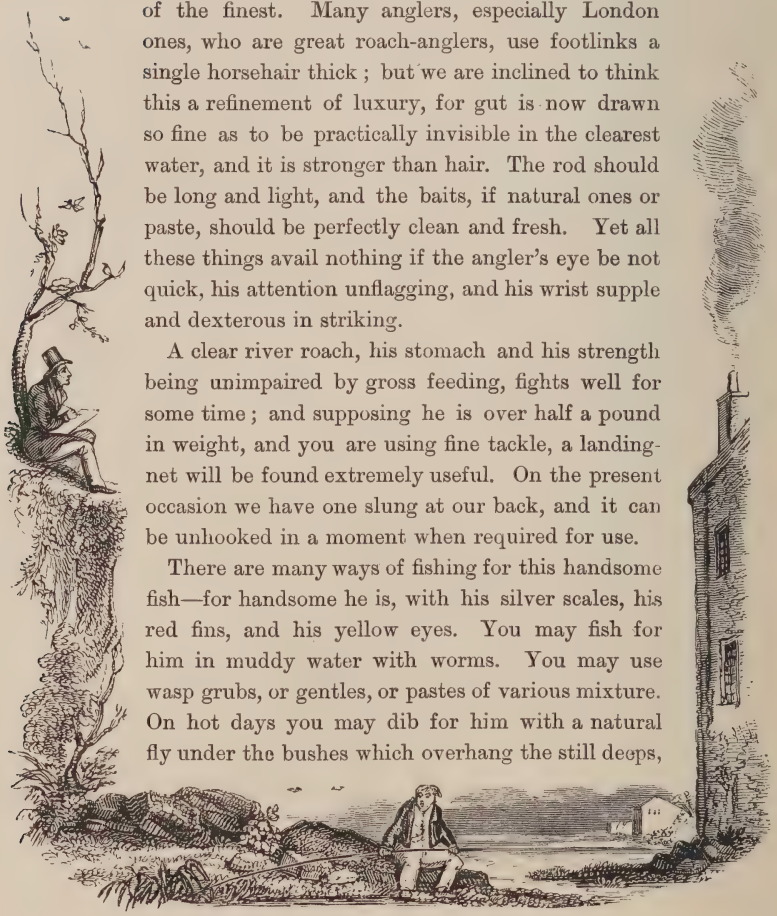
First, let us give our quarry the honour of his proper name, for in this eastern county, where the rustics' wits are as slow as their rivers, the roach suffers the indignity of being classed with the bream, and called by the family name of "white fish."

Cyprinus rutilus, then, is its scientific name, but we wonder how that fine fat fellow which has just risen to the surface and smelt at a tiny leaflet to see if it were digestible, would feel if he knew that he bore such a grand name—ah, Mr. C. Rutilus, we will show you such a dainty morsel by-and-by.

Walton says that the roach "is a fish of no great reputation for his dainty taste, and his spawn is accounted much better than any other part of him; and you may take notice that, as the carp is accounted the water-fox for his cunning, so the roach is accounted the water-sheep for his simplicity or foolishness." This charge of "simplicity or foolishness," however, is only partially true of the roach. In waters where small ones abound, they are greedy and silly enough, and the veriest tyro may catch them. Also in semi-tidal waters where the stream runs somewhat brackish and the mud at the bottom is foul, such as the lower reaches of the Yare, the big roach may be taken in great numbers by any one who can hold a rod over the side of the boat. Such fishing requires but little skill (and what is anything without the exercise of skill?) and such roach-fishers rank a very long way below the trout-fisher. But where the roach is at his best—such places as this river on whose banks we stand, whose deep, clear water slips gently over trailing weed, and rounds from the foot of a golden and green-striped shallow into a slowly eddying and blackly deep pool—it is fine work fishing for him. With a pole one could leap over the river in any place, yet that hole a little lower down is fully fourteen feet deep. It holds many an ancient roach of portentous size, whose size protects it from the jack which also inhabit it.

In fresh, clear water like this, the roach are shy-

biting creatures, and it needs considerable skill to catch them. We have seen an angler who could kill a fair basketful of trout on the brightest day at Coquetside, fail to maintain his reputation when roach-fishing in this stream. One's tackle must be of the finest. Many anglers, especially London ones, who are great roach-anglers, use footlinks a single horsehair thick; but we are inclined to think this a refinement of luxury, for gut is now drawn so fine as to be practically invisible in the clearest water, and it is stronger than hair. The rod should be long and light, and the baits, if natural ones or paste, should be perfectly clean and fresh. Yet all these things avail nothing if the angler's eye be not quick, his attention unflagging, and his wrist supple and dexterous in striking.



A clear river roach, his stomach and his strength being unimpaired by gross feeding, fights well for some time; and supposing he is over half a pound in weight, and you are using fine tackle, a landing-net will be found extremely useful. On the present occasion we have one slung at our back, and it can be unhooked in a moment when required for use.

There are many ways of fishing for this handsome fish—for handsome he is, with his silver scales, his red fins, and his yellow eyes. You may fish for him in muddy water with worms. You may use wasp grubs, or gentles, or pastes of various mixture. On hot days you may dib for him with a natural fly under the bushes which overhang the still deeps,

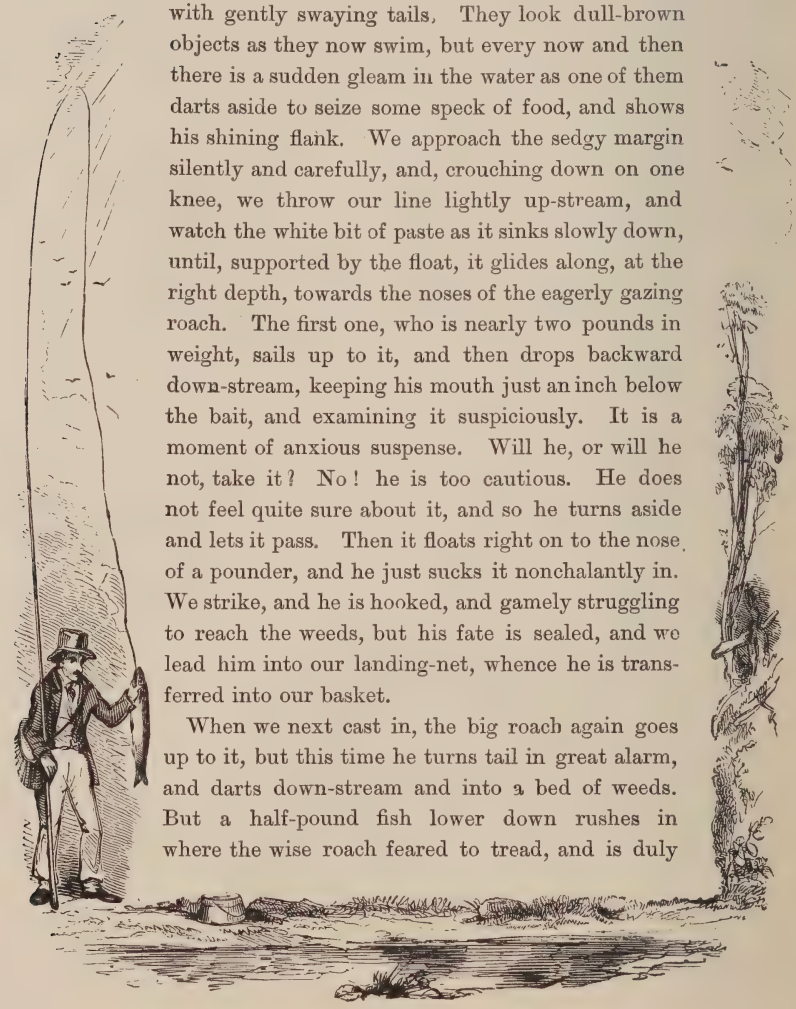
when you may catch some large ones. Or, better still, you may fly-fish for him wherever he is, with a "black gnat" on your casting-line, and the hook tipped with a tiny bit of white kid glove. This is a very killing way when the fish are playing about on the feed on summer evenings, but it needs a quick eye to see and a quick hand to strike as soon as a tiny circle is made upon the limpid stream. Best of all, however—because the roach is then at his best and strongest, and the big ones are more inclined to take the angler's bait—it is to fish as we are doing now, in chill October.

On a mild, still day, and (if the water is much fished) soon after sunrise, when the fish have had a night's rest to make them less suspicious, a good basket ought to be made in fairly stocked waters.

And now let us delay no longer. The sun has been long enough on the water to rouse the fish to a knowledge that it must be breakfast-time.

Our float, you see, is a light porcupine quill, and our hook is small and fine; six inches above it is one tiny shot. Our bait is a piece of paste, the size of a green pea, made of new white bread, carefully kneaded with clean hands until it is tough and sticky. Where we commence the water is about five feet deep, and at the bottom long masses of weed are swaying over smooth yellow gravel. Peering downward, at first we see nothing but the dark-green weeds; but as our eyes become accustomed to the deeper shade, we see, a foot above the





gravel, in the clear runs between the weeds, a dozen or more fine roach, their heads up the stream, and with gently swaying tails. They look dull-brown objects as they now swim, but every now and then there is a sudden gleam in the water as one of them darts aside to seize some speck of food, and shows his shining flank. We approach the sedgy margin silently and carefully, and, crouching down on one knee, we throw our line lightly up-stream, and watch the white bit of paste as it sinks slowly down, until, supported by the float, it glides along, at the right depth, towards the noses of the eagerly gazing roach. The first one, who is nearly two pounds in weight, sails up to it, and then drops backward down-stream, keeping his mouth just an inch below the bait, and examining it suspiciously. It is a moment of anxious suspense. Will he, or will he not, take it? No! he is too cautious. He does not feel quite sure about it, and so he turns aside and lets it pass. Then it floats right on to the nose of a pounder, and he just sucks it nonchalantly in. We strike, and he is hooked, and gamely struggling to reach the weeds, but his fate is sealed, and we lead him into our landing-net, whence he is transferred into our basket.

When we next cast in, the big roach again goes up to it, but this time he turns tail in great alarm, and darts down-stream and into a bed of weeds. But a half-pound fish lower down rushes in where the wise roach feared to tread, and is duly

basketed. Then, for three or four swims, we get no bites, for in such clear water the fish are soon alarmed, but after awhile we catch two more small ones.

Now we will leave this clear reach, and try that deep pool below, where a few tiny circlets on the surface show that some big roach are feeding—for the bigger a roach is the more delicately does he poke his nose out of his own element. We cannot see the fish, for the water is too deep and black, so, pushing ourselves into a bed of tall and crackling reeds, we drop our line into the water at the head of the pool, and watch the float slowly circling round in the eddy. Presently it gives a sharp jerk or two; that is the bite of a small one, and, on striking, we find that our bait has disappeared. At the next swim, just as our float reaches the tail of the pool, it stops, and slowly sinks. The hook has either caught in the bottom, or it is the bite of a big fish. We strike, and find that we are fast in a good one. It gives two or three vigorous dashes, just like a trout, and then submits to be turned shorewards. At the sight of the landing-net, however, it makes a further and prolonged effort, which causes our slender rod to bend and spring with great vivacity. With our fine tackle, and hampered as we are by the reeds, the slightest flurry might cause us to lose it, but we are cool and patient, so in another minute the fish is safe within the circle of the net. His weight is within

an ounce of two pounds, therefore we may call him a very good roach indeed.

In the course of the next half-hour we catch three or four more, and all good ones. Then, as we pull out a small one about six inches long, we see a shadow dart out from under the bank, and a gleam and twist in the water. That was a jack of four or five pounds in weight, and evidently on the feed. In spite of the fineness of our tackle, we will try for him, so we tie three or four hooks to the end of the line, and, with the small roach for bait, we improvise a spinning tackle. Casting it into the water, we work it close to the bank. In an instant there is a swirl in the water, and a flash of green and gold—for jacks have now a bravely mottled flank; and as the jaws of *Esox Lucius* close upon the bait with a savage tug, our thin gut line is severed, and flies back in the air in glistening coils, and the jack retires to his den—oh! with toothpicks gratis,—while we repair our tackle and meditate upon the folly of too vast an ambition.

Yet a little lower down-stream, and we come to a spot where it flows broad and shallow, with lanes of clear water between long quivering tresses of weeds, which are being slowly combed by the sunken leaves and twigs which the current forces through them. In these lanes of water the roach are well on the feed, and every swim we get a bite. In two hours we have caught a goodly number, many of them half a pound in weight, and two of them

over a pound each. Then they cease biting, and after trying in vain for some time, we look round to ascertain the cause. The eastern sky has grown pale and cold, and there is a thin line of dark, hard-edged cloud resting athwart it. We also become sensible of a keenness in the air, and we find that the wind has gone round to the east. The ripples already shimmering on the water tell us that a strong easterly wind is springing up, and so goodbye to our fishing.

We wander downward, just throwing in now and then for form's sake, and note the few things the autumn winds and rains have left us. Here is a late tuft of the yellow loosestrife; there the green blossoms of the ivy, which wreaths round that slanting pollard. Yonder a bed of tall nettles, covered with the fading yellow of the parasitic dodder, and here the greenish spikes of the mercury goose-foot, or Good King Henry. On this marsh the tall bulrushes bend their rich brown heads to the easterly air, and in this small, rush-fringed lagoon the floating duckweed is scattered by the rising of a mallard.

On this mud-bank is the seal of an otter, and the track of his broad foot, together with the tail part of an eel off which he has breakfasted. Across the river a water-rat swims under the water, its compressed fur gleaming with silvery air-bubbles, and the ubiquitous water-hen flutters from the sedges.

All around are the glowing reds, and browns,



and yellows of the sad, sweet autumn time. Leaves, fragrant in decay, flutter against us; starlings chatter in the reeds, and rise in a whirling cloud; and the rooks wheel and tumble in the grey sky above us.

In our hearts there is a restful peace, tinged with a pleasant melancholy; and so we walk on in full content, and come to a tiny, straw-thatched and moss-covered cottage, set in its little garden, close by the water's edge. Here live an old couple, all by themselves, cheered only by the occasional visit of a child or grandchild. Old Morris was a farm labourer; then, as he grew old, a stone-breaker; and now he is too old and too rheumatic for that. It is a wonder how the old couple live. They have a plot of garden in which they grow a few potatoes, but their crop has been bad this year; and we know from one who sometimes befriends them that times are hard with them, and that they have lived for a week together on the fish caught by the old man, who was a deft angler in his youth. There he is now sitting on a stool by the waterside, and patiently waiting for a bite, with greater interest, we cannot but know, than we ever did; for his dinner depends upon the anxiety of the fish to take theirs. He is shivering with the cold, and looks anything but comfortable. On the grass behind him lies one small fish, and he is not likely now to catch any more. He does not see us, and he is as deaf as a post, so we turn out the contents of our



basket to add to his one fish—reserving, however, a brace of the best for ourselves.

When old Morris discovers the addition to his store, will he think, we wonder, that the miracle of the loaves and fishes has been repeated? and with what additional fervour will his good wife thank the Lord when she finds half-a-crown in the belly of the biggest roach!





THE LINN.

VERY bright and pleasant are the pictures which cross the mental view of the Angler in his hours of rest. The hard-worked lawyer, politician, or merchant may throw himself back in his easy-chair after dinner, and escape from the cares of his business to wander in green fields and by flowing streams. To him there appear pictures so vivid that he smiles to himself as he thinks of the deep impression made upon his mind by the beauty he saw in those bygone days of sport, and free, wild wanderings. One picture may arise a hundred times, but it is none the less vivid for that, and none the less welcome. He can live over again that gloomy, windy day by the mountain tarn, set amid the rugged rocks, when the trout rose so freely, and the weight of his creel was almost more than he could bear on his homeward journey. Again he rambles through the feathery meadow-sweet and luxuriant grass, full of daisies and buttercups, by the side of a southern trout stream, and sends the May-fly to yon eddy where the big trout lies. Once more he sees the salmon surging up-stream at the end of seventy yards of line







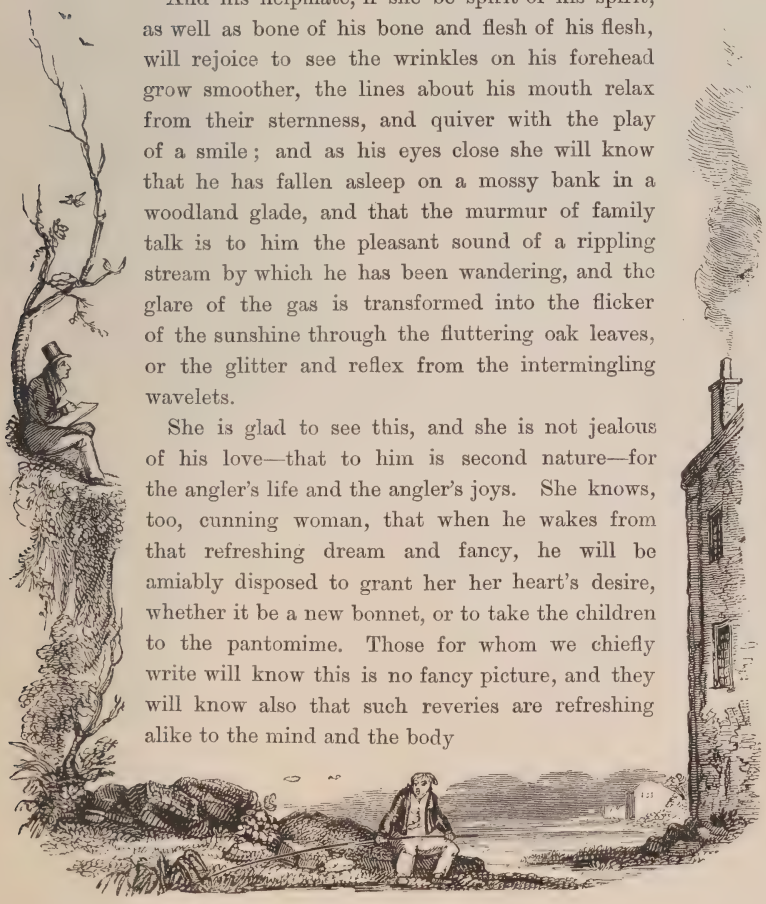


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and his frantic bound out of the brown water. Once again he lies in dreamy contentment by the side of a lilied pool, and watches his float slide away with the bite of a carp, or duck briskly with the dash of a perch.

And his helpmate, if she be spirit of his spirit, as well as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, will rejoice to see the wrinkles on his forehead grow smoother, the lines about his mouth relax from their sternness, and quiver with the play of a smile; and as his eyes close she will know that he has fallen asleep on a mossy bank in a woodland glade, and that the murmur of family talk is to him the pleasant sound of a rippling stream by which he has been wandering, and the glare of the gas is transformed into the flicker of the sunshine through the fluttering oak leaves, or the glitter and reflex from the intermingling wavelets.

She is glad to see this, and she is not jealous of his love—that to him is second nature—for the angler's life and the angler's joys. She knows, too, cunning woman, that when he wakes from that refreshing dream and fancy, he will be amiably disposed to grant her her heart's desire, whether it be a new bonnet, or to take the children to the pantomime. Those for whom we chiefly write will know this is no fancy picture, and they will know also that such reveries are refreshing alike to the mind and the body



Too often, alas! the power of indulging in such reveries is wanting. The nerves are so keenly strung from the high pressure to which they have been subjected, that they cannot relax and rest even for a moment, and the brain has been so busy that it cannot throw off the habit of work. In such a case, involuntary reverie and thought such as we have described are impossible; and then, we who write, and many like us, we are glad to say, step in to the rescue, and present with friendly force to the rebellious brain the soothing medicine of a picture in words. This is our mission, to bring back to jaded hearts the time when

> "The glad spring green grows luminous
> With coming summer's golden glow,
> And merry birds sing as they sang to us
> In far-off seasons long ago."

Then away to the Linn with us, and hey for a merry day! and a breath of the freshest air, and a ramble by the bonniest burnside in the North Country.

There is the Linn, and at first sight there is not much to see. A steep hillside, thickly covered with heather, stretching up to the wild moorland above, and broken into rocky ridges, is cleft by a deep ravine, which appears to be filled to overflowing with trees and shrubs. From the foot of the ravine and out of the dense underwood, a stream steals rapidly away like a fox from a covert

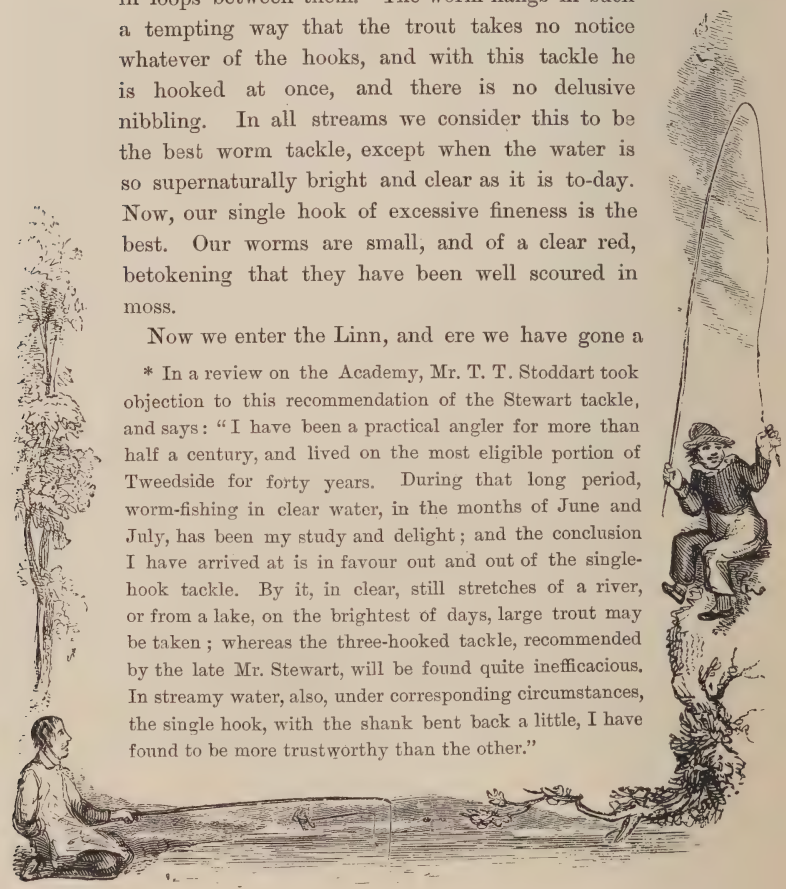


when the hounds enter. This is the Linn. You had better put your rod together outside, for there is not overmuch space inside, and it is often a difficult matter to put it together where the trees grow close, and the top joint will catch in the branches.

It may seem a strange kind of day that we have selected for an angling ramble. There are many fishers who would laugh us to scorn for sallying out with a rod this day, for it is a brilliant blazing summer's day, and the water in the burn is as clear as crystal. "No trout would look at a fly on such a day." No, friend, but they will look at a clean red worm if it be handled as we mean to handle it. We intend to catch a fair quantity of trout, clear as the water is and cloudless the sky. Therefore, if you would learn a wrinkle, look at our tackle. Our rod is short and rather stiff, not made for throwing a fly, but excellently adapted for pitching a worm into a far-away eddy between rocks and roots, and the very thing for holding a fish by the head without giving him an inch of line, in places—and there are many such in the Linn—where to give a fish line would be to lose him. At the end of our line are six feet of fine gut, the last few links of gut so fine that it is no thicker than horsehair. The hook is of extremely fine and beautiful steel, and sharper than any needle. Were the water a little darker, we should use the Stewart tackle, which,

as an "all round" worm tackle, is better than any other.* It is made of three small hooks, tied on the gut at interval of half an inch, and facing opposite ways. To bait this, each hook is passed right through the worm laterally, so that it hangs in loops between them. The worm hangs in such a tempting way that the trout takes no notice whatever of the hooks, and with this tackle he is hooked at once, and there is no delusive nibbling. In all streams we consider this to be the best worm tackle, except when the water is so supernaturally bright and clear as it is to-day. Now, our single hook of excessive fineness is the best. Our worms are small, and of a clear red, betokening that they have been well scoured in moss.

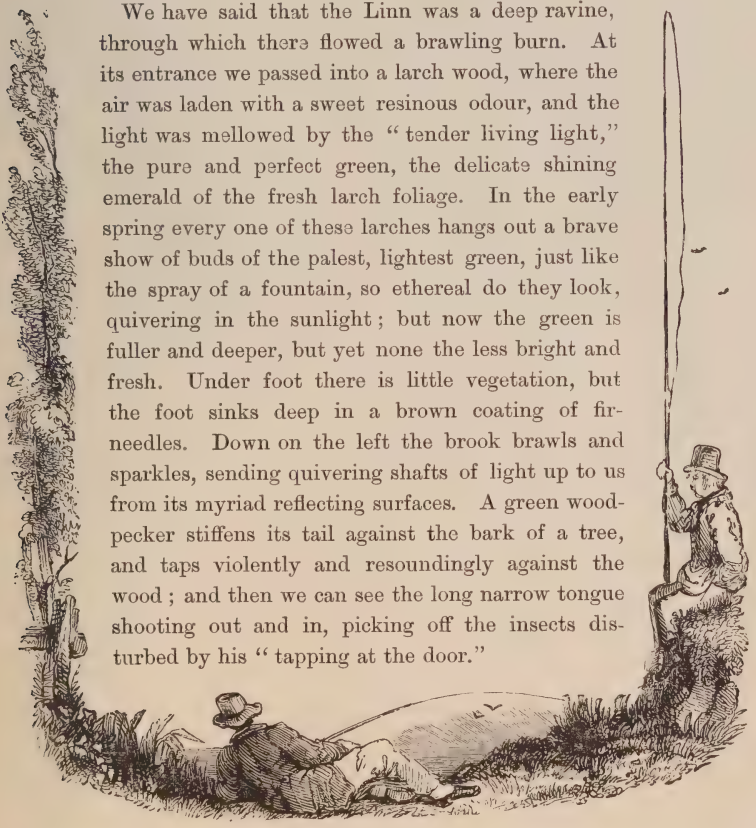
Now we enter the Linn, and ere we have gone a



* In a review on the Academy, Mr. T. T. Stoddart took objection to this recommendation of the Stewart tackle, and says: "I have been a practical angler for more than half a century, and lived on the most eligible portion of Tweedside for forty years. During that long period, worm-fishing in clear water, in the months of June and July, has been my study and delight; and the conclusion I have arrived at is in favour out and out of the single-hook tackle. By it, in clear, still stretches of a river, or from a lake, on the brightest of days, large trout may be taken; whereas the three-hooked tackle, recommended by the late Mr. Stewart, will be found quite inefficacious. In streamy water, also, under corresponding circumstances, the single hook, with the shank bent back a little, I have found to be more trustworthy than the other."

hundred yards its exceeding beauty grows upon us. To say that it is indescribable would imply that it is a folly to attempt to describe it; but as the very object of our article is to describe the Linn, that "the old place may bring the old time back," we will not say that it is indescribable, and we will select a pen made of the quill of a wild goose, shot in its upper portion, to aid us in our task.

We have said that the Linn was a deep ravine, through which there flowed a brawling burn. At its entrance we passed into a larch wood, where the air was laden with a sweet resinous odour, and the light was mellowed by the "tender living light," the pure and perfect green, the delicate shining emerald of the fresh larch foliage. In the early spring every one of these larches hangs out a brave show of buds of the palest, lightest green, just like the spray of a fountain, so ethereal do they look, quivering in the sunlight; but now the green is fuller and deeper, but yet none the less bright and fresh. Under foot there is little vegetation, but the foot sinks deep in a brown coating of fir-needles. Down on the left the brook brawls and sparkles, sending quivering shafts of light up to us from its myriad reflecting surfaces. A green woodpecker stiffens its tail against the bark of a tree, and taps violently and resoundingly against the wood; and then we can see the long narrow tongue shooting out and in, picking off the insects disturbed by his "tapping at the door."

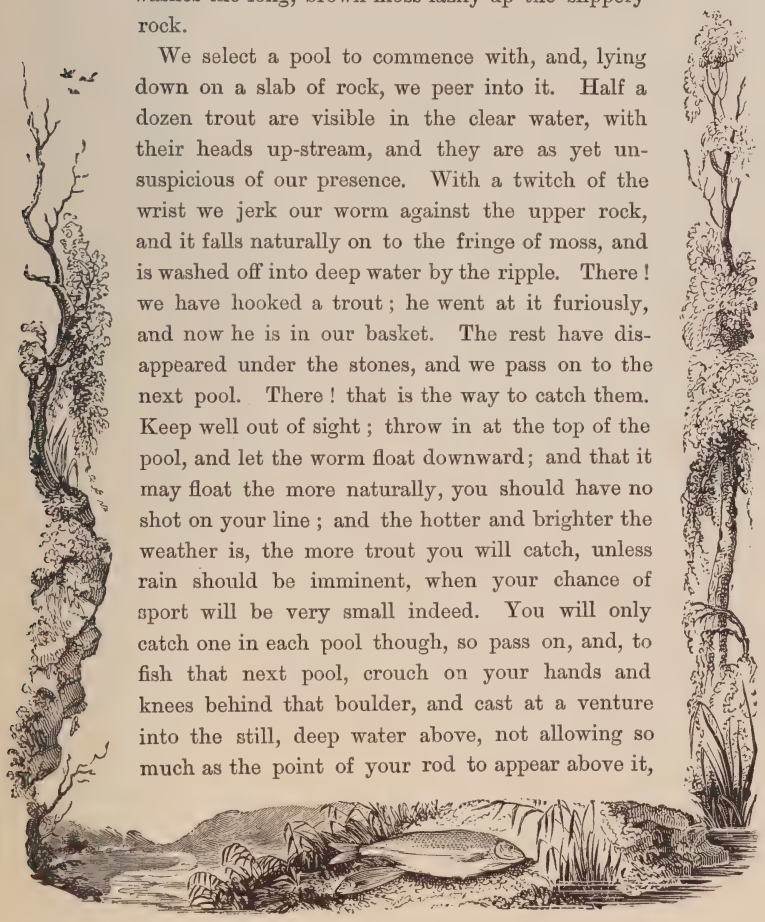


Out of the larch wood we reach the wilder part of the ravine. A rude path leads by the stream, and crosses it every now and then by means of a rude and picturesque wooden bridge. On the other side the rocks rise in craggy ledges, cracked and seamed and furrowed, as if nature had done her utmost to rive the hill asunder in some fierce throe of agony. Dwarf oaks grow wherever there is a crevice large enough to hold their roots; the rowan trees strew their foliage of airiest lightness; and here and there the "lady of the forest," the "silver birk," rears its graceful form—its white and shining stem a fair contrast to the rugged rocks, and its drooping tresses to the sturdy oaks. The underwood is thick and luxuriant. Tall brackens rise boldly up through interlacing brambles, and between the path and the burn is a fringe of hazels, into which a squirrel has unwisely retreated, and in his haste to escape from us executes wonderful feats among the too pliant branches. The bed of the brook is wide, as becomes a mountain brook which, after heavy rain, is a raging torrent; but at present the water twists and turns around boulders of every size, and every hundred paces pours down in silvery cataracts over high ledges of rocks into deep, bubbling pools below. These rocks and boulders are piled and strewn in the wildest confusion. Every now and then the stream disappears, to reappear welling from beneath some cavernous rock. Here the



brook is divided into a score of channels—like black snakes writhing in shining folds; and there it gathers in a deep frothing pool, underneath a forest of broad, cool, harts-tongue ferns, and washes the long, brown moss lazily up the slippery rock.

We select a pool to commence with, and, lying down on a slab of rock, we peer into it. Half a dozen trout are visible in the clear water, with their heads up-stream, and they are as yet unsuspicious of our presence. With a twitch of the wrist we jerk our worm against the upper rock, and it falls naturally on to the fringe of moss, and is washed off into deep water by the ripple. There! we have hooked a trout; he went at it furiously, and now he is in our basket. The rest have disappeared under the stones, and we pass on to the next pool. There! that is the way to catch them. Keep well out of sight; throw in at the top of the pool, and let the worm float downward; and that it may float the more naturally, you should have no shot on your line; and the hotter and brighter the weather is, the more trout you will catch, unless rain should be imminent, when your chance of sport will be very small indeed. You will only catch one in each pool though, so pass on, and, to fish that next pool, crouch on your hands and knees behind that boulder, and cast at a venture into the still, deep water above, not allowing so much as the point of your rod to appear above it,



for the trout seem floating in air, so clear is the stream.

Is not every yard of ground a perfect study? Look at that large, sloping rock above you. On it grow the greenest mosses, glossy harts-tongue ferns, the black maidenhair spleenwort, and the graceful green spleenwort. Its broad surface is stained with many shades of grey, brown, and green; and just at its foot, a clump of forget-me-nots laughs at us with its blue eyes. At the summit, a monster lady-fern waves its handsome fronds in the light summer breeze, while down one side of it the water slides in a black current, broken into silver by opposing points of rock; and at the foot of the waterfall, on a projecting spur, sits a white-breasted water-ouzel, flipping its tail, and singing its robin-like song.

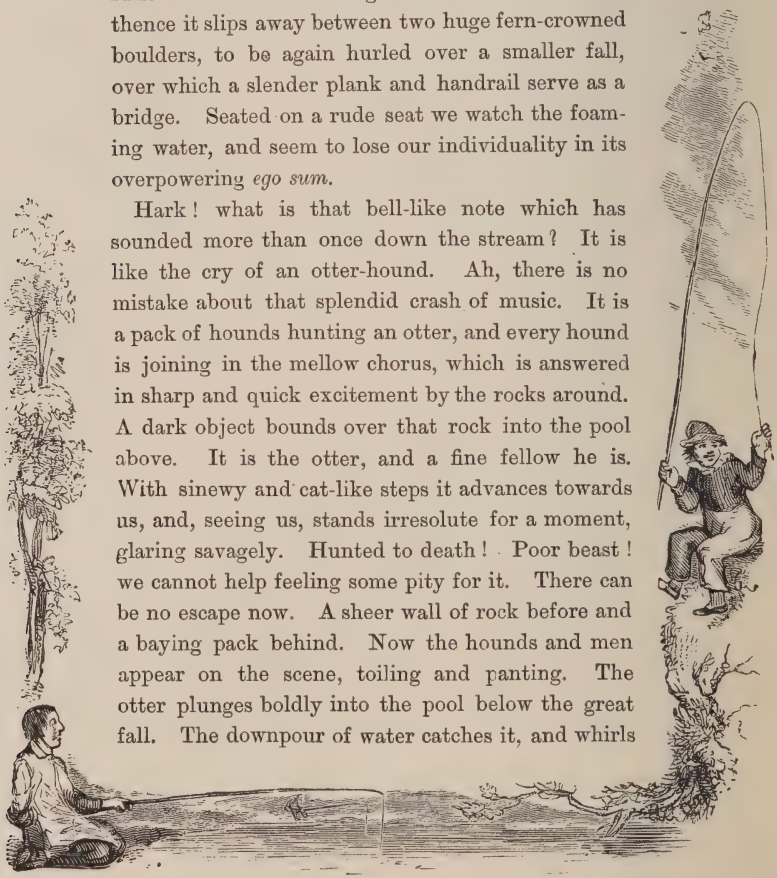
To-day we have little difficulty in picking up a trout from each likely pool, and so we scramble on over the uneven ground, getting used to the murmur of the water, so that it becomes a silence in which we can hear the hum of that cloud of gnats, golden in the sunlight, which quivers above us.

And now the ravine grows narrower, and its sides higher and more precipitous. The brambles and the thorns are fewer, but the ferns are doubly luxuriant. Every crest and coign of vantage is crowded with lady-ferns, and some on the edge of the rock, which, from some cause or other, have met with a premature death, hang over in clustered tresses of

golden brown. The shield-fern vies with the lady-ferns in luxuriance, but not in beauty, and the common bracken now gives place to his nobler congeners. Then, with a sudden transition from the wildness and the tropical luxuriance of the ferns, we come upon a meadowy interspace, margined with oaks, and flecked with sunshine and shadow, sleeping quietly in a sunny haze and silence. Across this there runs a tiny tributary stream, scarce six inches wide in parts, but every few yards falling over a stone into a little pool—a pool not much larger and deeper than a good-sized saucepan. Yet watch. We drop our worm on the top of a puny waterfall, and it is carried souse into the pool below, a troutlet darts at it from under the bank, and is hooked. Each pool seems to hold just one trout, about six inches long, and if one is caught its place is supplied a day or two afterwards. In the space of twenty yards we catch four small trout in this manner, and each in its own little pool, where hitherto he was monarch of all he surveyed.

Beyond the glade the ravine becomes still narrower, the rocks become barer, but are painted with stripes of brilliant green, where runlets of water trickle over cushiony moss. The waterfalls increase in height and grandeur, and the water is always white with foam and sparkling with air-bells, each of which seems to hold captive a bit of sunbeam. We become sensible of a louder roar, and then we come to the end of the Linn, and its crowning

beauty bursts upon us. Far above our heads tower the overhanging rocks, the foliage of the trees on either side intermingling in the middle. From a height of fifty feet the burn flings itself over the rock in a splendid cascade, and plunges with a sullen roar into the boiling caldron beneath. From thence it slips away between two huge fern-crowned boulders, to be again hurled over a smaller fall, over which a slender plank and handrail serve as a bridge. Seated on a rude seat we watch the foaming water, and seem to lose our individuality in its overpowering *ego sum*.

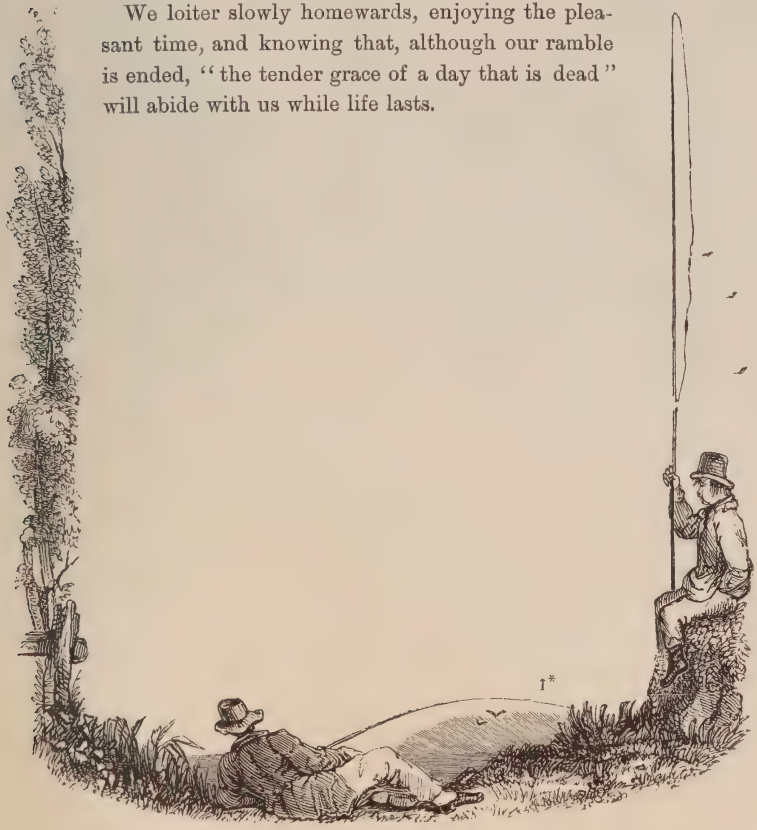


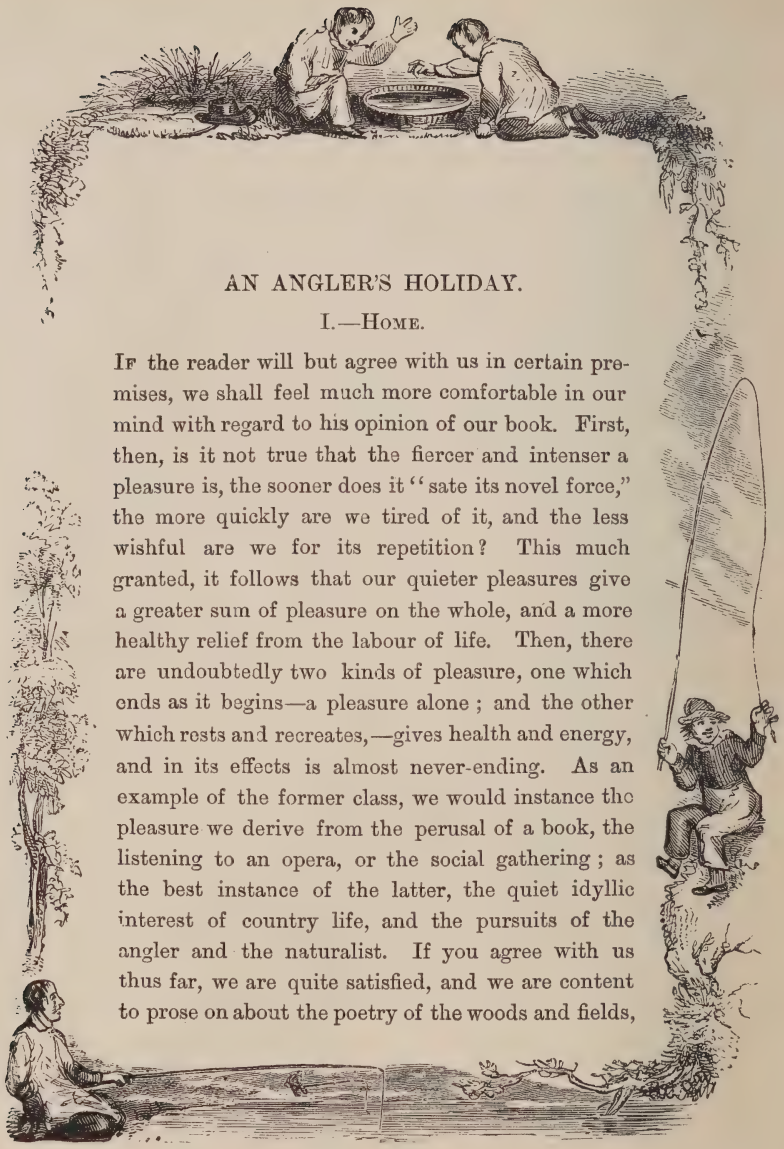
Hark! what is that bell-like note which has sounded more than once down the stream? It is like the cry of an otter-hound. Ah, there is no mistake about that splendid crash of music. It is a pack of hounds hunting an otter, and every hound is joining in the mellow chorus, which is answered in sharp and quick excitement by the rocks around. A dark object bounds over that rock into the pool above. It is the otter, and a fine fellow he is. With sinewy and cat-like steps it advances towards us, and, seeing us, stands irresolute for a moment, glaring savagely. Hunted to death! Poor beast! we cannot help feeling some pity for it. There can be no escape now. A sheer wall of rock before and a baying pack behind. Now the hounds and men appear on the scene, toiling and panting. The otter plunges boldly into the pool below the great fall. The downpour of water catches it, and whirls



it over and over, driving it pitilessly from its last hope—that dark hole in the rock behind the fall. As it rises exhausted on the verge of the pool, the hounds are upon it, and, after a short, brave struggle for life, the otter is killed and the hunt is over. The echoing shouts of the men and the belling of the hounds die away from the crags, and the silence of death hangs over the beautiful Linn.

We loiter slowly homewards, enjoying the pleasant time, and knowing that, although our ramble is ended, "the tender grace of a day that is dead" will abide with us while life lasts.





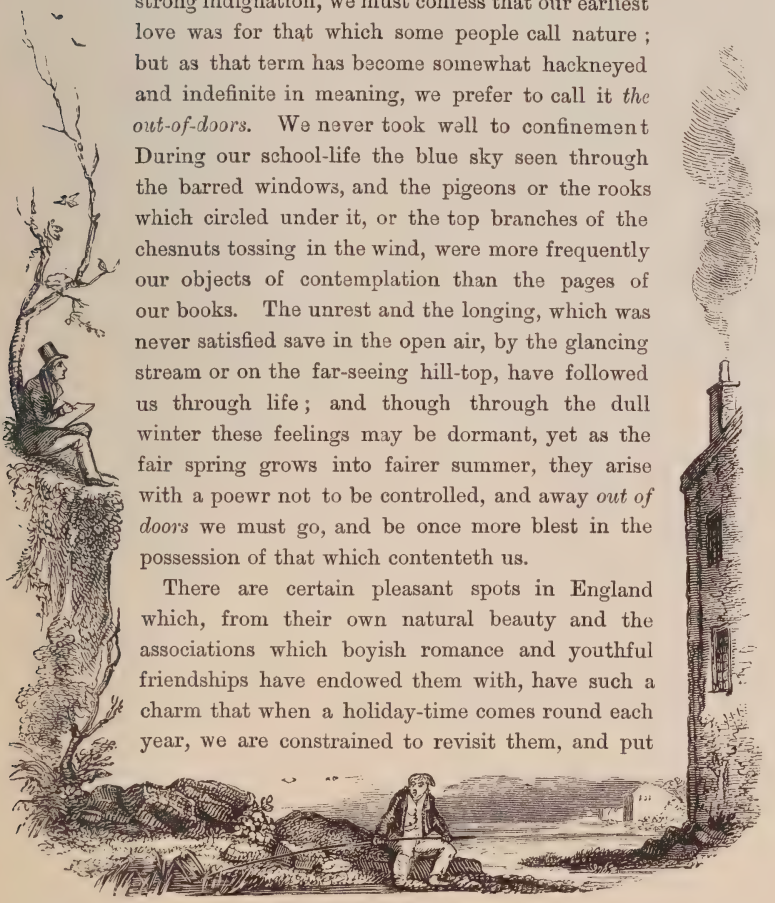
AN ANGLER'S HOLIDAY.

I.—Home.

If the reader will but agree with us in certain premises, we shall feel much more comfortable in our mind with regard to his opinion of our book. First, then, is it not true that the fiercer and intenser a pleasure is, the sooner does it "sate its novel force," the more quickly are we tired of it, and the less wishful are we for its repetition? This much granted, it follows that our quieter pleasures give a greater sum of pleasure on the whole, and a more healthy relief from the labour of life. Then, there are undoubtedly two kinds of pleasure, one which ends as it begins—a pleasure alone; and the other which rests and recreates,—gives health and energy, and in its effects is almost never-ending. As an example of the former class, we would instance the pleasure we derive from the perusal of a book, the listening to an opera, or the social gathering; as the best instance of the latter, the quiet idyllic interest of country life, and the pursuits of the angler and the naturalist. If you agree with us thus far, we are quite satisfied, and we are content to prose on about the poetry of the woods and fields,

the lakes and streams, just as a grand-dad talks of the feats of his youth, or the lover prates of the charms of his mistress.

Confession is good for the soul, they say, and at the risk of drawing down upon our heads some strong indignation, we must confess that our earliest love was for that which some people call nature; but as that term has become somewhat hackneyed and indefinite in meaning, we prefer to call it *the out-of-doors*. We never took well to confinement During our school-life the blue sky seen through the barred windows, and the pigeons or the rooks which circled under it, or the top branches of the chesnuts tossing in the wind, were more frequently our objects of contemplation than the pages of our books. The unrest and the longing, which was never satisfied save in the open air, by the glancing stream or on the far-seeing hill-top, have followed us through life; and though through the dull winter these feelings may be dormant, yet as the fair spring grows into fairer summer, they arise with a poewr not to be controlled, and away *out of doors* we must go, and be once more blest in the possession of that which contenteth us.



There are certain pleasant spots in England which, from their own natural beauty and the associations which boyish romance and youthful friendships have endowed them with, have such a charm that when a holiday-time comes round each year, we are constrained to revisit them, and put

off for yet another year the pilgrimage to fresh fields and pastures new which in the winter time we have planned. As the race for pelf grows swifter, the time for a holiday is more hardly snatched, and yet more keenly longed for. With us a habit has arisen of discussing on Sundays, at dessert, the manner in which the next vacation shall be spent. It is pleasant to talk so, although the fulfilment of these plans falls far short, as a rule, of their conception. Whatever we plan, though, as the time for starting grows near, we feel that mere rest is the great desideratum, and so we dive at once into the stillness and fragrance of a quiet, restful, country holiday. What it is like we will try to show you, if you will only care to read.

June blazed forth her hottest, and then strove to quench her heat with many showers. After a fortnight's rain the glass became more settled, and it seemed to us that there was every prospect of some continued fair weather. So as July grew apace we resolved to visit the home we had not seen for a twelvemonth, ere the June roses had lost their glow. It was a long journey. Starting in the afternoon, we stayed the night at a manufacturing town, and then we started westward, through a country that steamed under a soft, warm rain, to the pleasant house that nestled where the border hills of Wales curtseyed to the rich Shropshire plain. After the dwarf vegetation and hard-



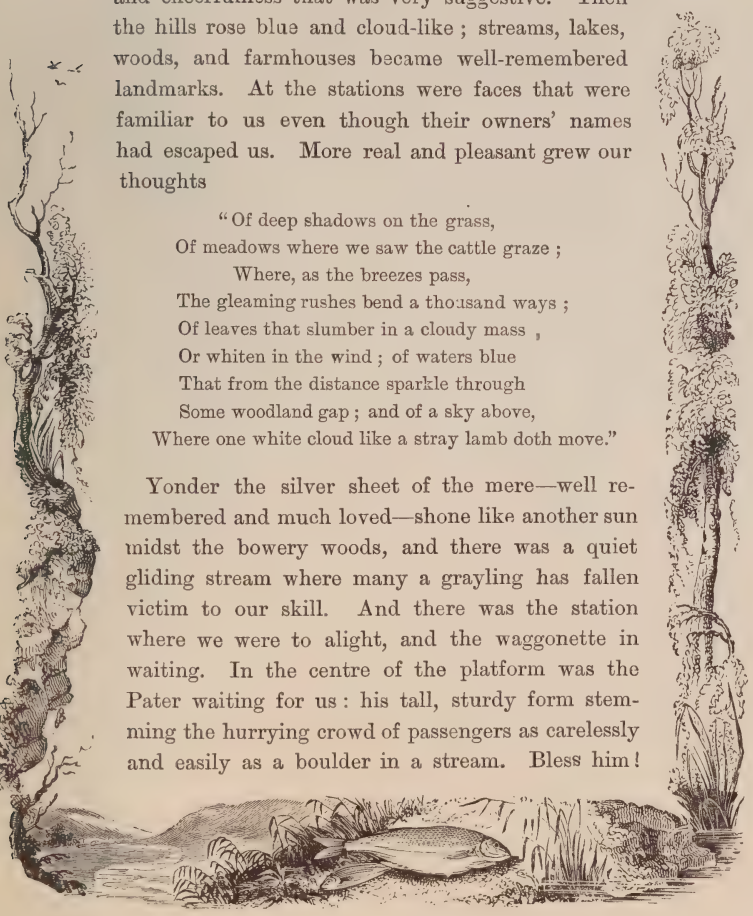




looking woods of the north, it was delicious to see the fat, green hedges panting under their load of glistening rain-drops, the luxuriant grass fields, and the massy woodlands. There was a sense of plenty and cheerfulness that was very suggestive. Then the hills rose blue and cloud-like; streams, lakes, woods, and farmhouses became well-remembered landmarks. At the stations were faces that were familiar to us even though their owners' names had escaped us. More real and pleasant grew our thoughts

"Of deep shadows on the grass,
Of meadows where we saw the cattle graze;
Where, as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes bend a thousand ways;
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind; of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap; and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move."

Yonder the silver sheet of the mere—well remembered and much loved—shone like another sun midst the bowery woods, and there was a quiet gliding stream where many a grayling has fallen victim to our skill. And there was the station where we were to alight, and the waggonette in waiting. In the centre of the platform was the Pater waiting for us: his tall, sturdy form stemming the hurrying crowd of passengers as carelessly and easily as a boulder in a stream. Bless him!



his welcome of his "boy" is a keen one. We will sketch his portrait by-and-by.

We drove through the country lanes towards Rosesbower as the rain-clouds lifted, and the sun, peeping saucily from behind his mask, drew out the fragrance of a thousand flowers. In front of us were three tall poplars, bowing lazily and whitening creamily in the wind that had sprung up to play with the sun and chase the rain. These poplars were the landmark which showed the position of our home, but the lanes wound in and out so much that they were now this side and now that, and often behind us. One lane was deep and high-hedged, so that we drove along through a leafy tunnel, and here the honeysuckle lingered yet in wonderful profusion, covering the hedges with masses of white and yellow, blush-pink and crimson, giving forth the sweetest and most grateful incense. We drew full breaths again and again with huge and childish delight, and great gratitude to the Giver of Good. There came into our minds a passage from a book which we always take with us into the country, "The Flowering Plants of Great Britain," by Anne Pratt, which is so appreciative of the honeysuckle that we quote it:—

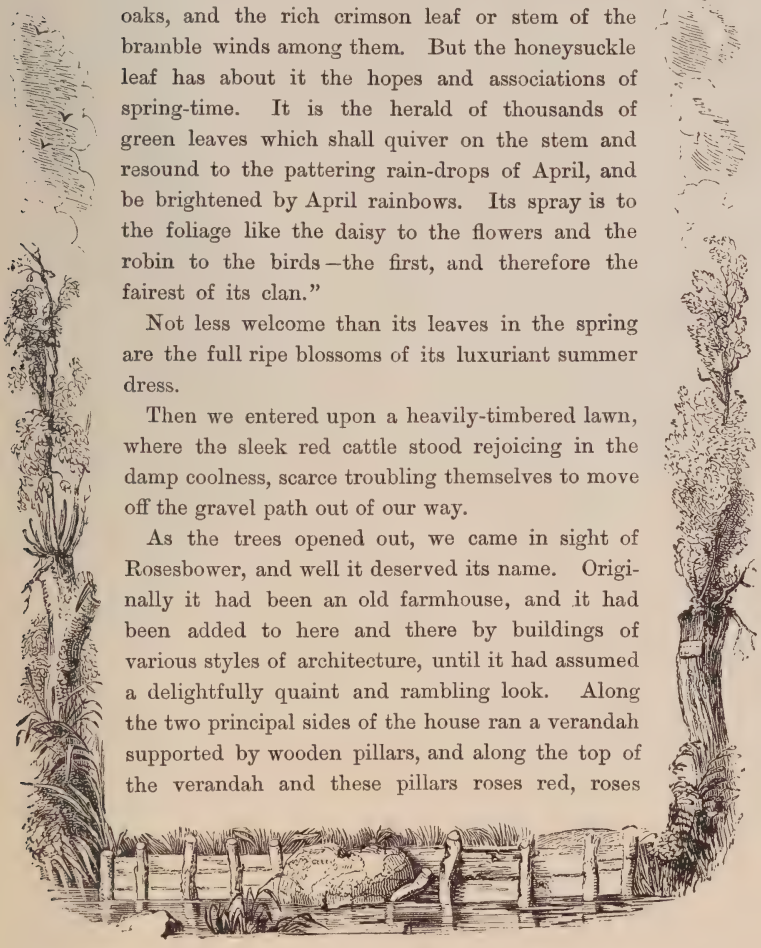
"When the honeysuckle first puts forth its leaves the landscape is looking dreary. The thorns, with bronzed stems, hang dripping with rain-drops; the dark leaves of the dark-leaved privet glisten near the red twigs of the cornel; while perchance some

bough of the yellow osier seems like a golden rod, or some catkin of willow or hazel gives a little brightness to the scene. Brown leaves, with an occasional yellow spray, hang on the youngling oaks, and the rich crimson leaf or stem of the bramble winds among them. But the honeysuckle leaf has about it the hopes and associations of spring-time. It is the herald of thousands of green leaves which shall quiver on the stem and resound to the pattering rain-drops of April, and be brightened by April rainbows. Its spray is to the foliage like the daisy to the flowers and the robin to the birds—the first, and therefore the fairest of its clan."

Not less welcome than its leaves in the spring are the full ripe blossoms of its luxuriant summer dress.

Then we entered upon a heavily-timbered lawn, where the sleek red cattle stood rejoicing in the damp coolness, scarce troubling themselves to move off the gravel path out of our way.

As the trees opened out, we came in sight of Rosesbower, and well it deserved its name. Originally it had been an old farmhouse, and it had been added to here and there by buildings of various styles of architecture, until it had assumed a delightfully quaint and rambling look. Along the two principal sides of the house ran a verandah supported by wooden pillars, and along the top of the verandah and these pillars roses red, roses

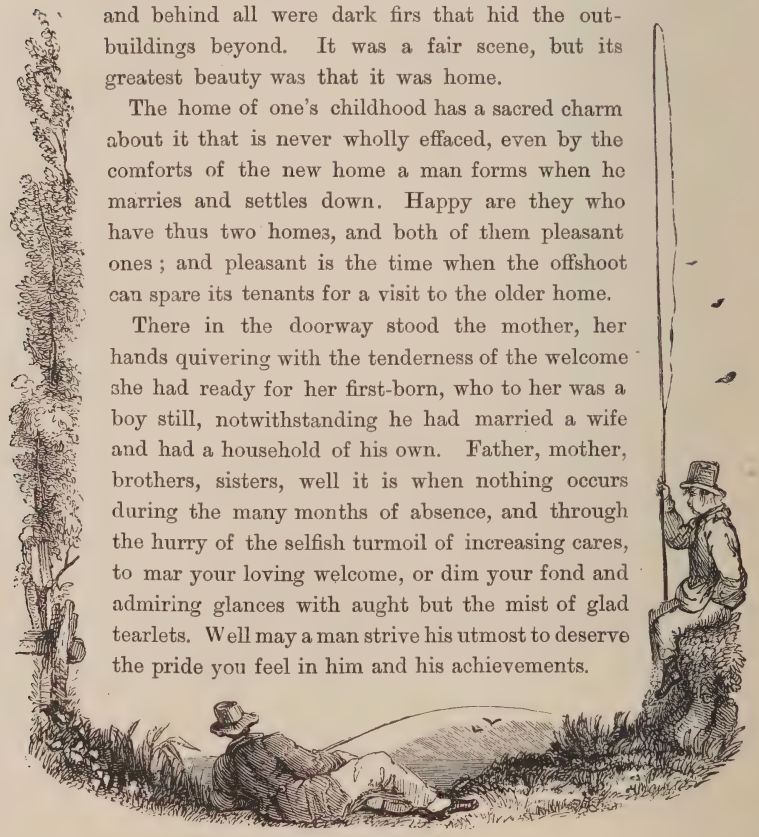


white, and roses yellow grew in the greatest profusion, and with the happiest effect of colour.

Near one part of the house a large wild cherry-tree grew on the shaven lawn, the red fruit trembling multitudinous among the leaves. On the left part of the house a lime-tree flung its sheltering branches over one end of the croquet-lawn, and to the right stretched the flower-gardens, resplendent in colour, and behind all were dark firs that hid the out-buildings beyond. It was a fair scene, but its greatest beauty was that it was home.

The home of one's childhood has a sacred charm about it that is never wholly effaced, even by the comforts of the new home a man forms when he marries and settles down. Happy are they who have thus two homes, and both of them pleasant ones; and pleasant is the time when the offshoot can spare its tenants for a visit to the older home.

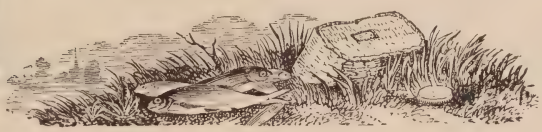
There in the doorway stood the mother, her hands quivering with the tenderness of the welcome she had ready for her first-born, who to her was a boy still, notwithstanding he had married a wife and had a household of his own. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, well it is when nothing occurs during the many months of absence, and through the hurry of the selfish turmoil of increasing cares, to mar your loving welcome, or dim your fond and admiring glances with aught but the mist of glad tearlets. Well may a man strive his utmost to deserve the pride you feel in him and his achievements.



Well, we were at home, and maternal solicitude suggested something to eat, and a most prolonged and charming lunch it was, with much gossip and laughter, while the rain-drops fell from the eaves on to the carpet of rose-petals, which the showers had scattered on the lawn, and the scent of Gloir de Dijon and Marshal Niel tickled our nostrils gratefully.

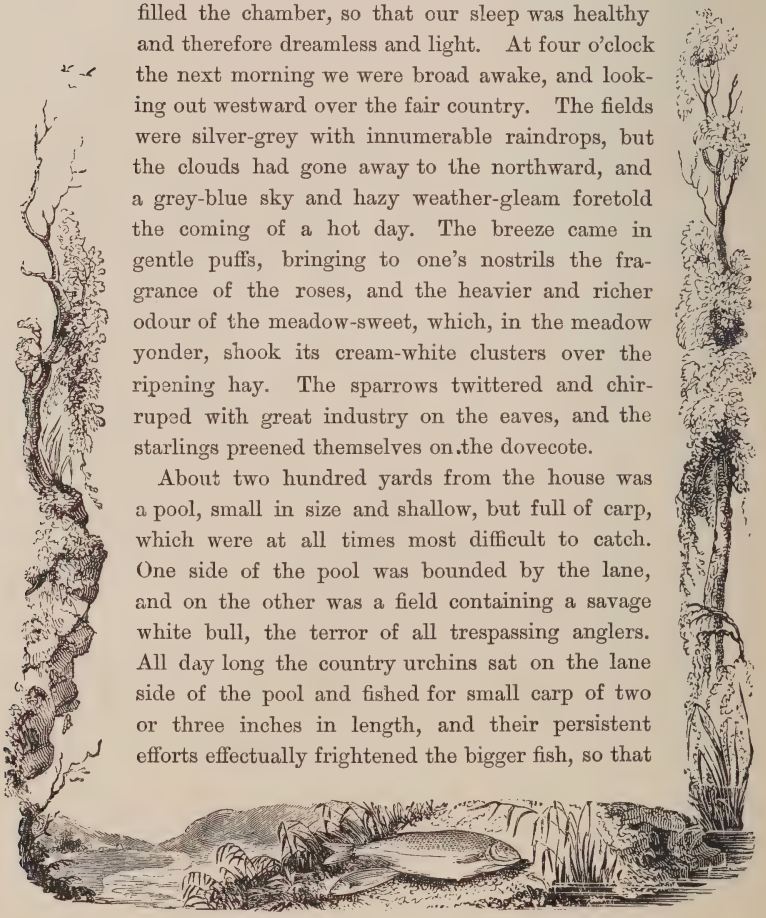
Then we wandered out and about, despite of the wet under foot, visiting and making friends with the cattle, the horses, and the dogs, and pacing the garden walks, duly admiring the gardener's *chefs-d'œuvre*, startling the cushat from the ivied tree at the end of the kitchen-garden; getting wet through with the sudden showers; changing twice, and getting a mighty appetite for dinner; and afterwards enjoying a cosy chat in the Pater's sanctum, a room that opened with glass doors on to the verandah. So we looked out westward over the undulating meadows and copses to the blue border hills that now stood out sharp and clear, and then receded and were blurred with a yellow curtain of rain. The purple rain-clouds grew ragged and golden at the edges, the gloaming crept up from the weather-gleam, and the night fell peaceful and soundless, save for the recurrent grating cry of a corncrake in the long grass of the hayfield, and the scream of the whirling swifts.

K



II.—Up with the Lark.

The window of our bedroom was left open, and the cool night air, fresh from the rain-wet woods, filled the chamber, so that our sleep was healthy and therefore dreamless and light. At four o'clock the next morning we were broad awake, and looking out westward over the fair country. The fields were silver-grey with innumerable raindrops, but the clouds had gone away to the northward, and a grey-blue sky and hazy weather-gleam foretold the coming of a hot day. The breeze came in gentle puffs, bringing to one's nostrils the fragrance of the roses, and the heavier and richer odour of the meadow-sweet, which, in the meadow yonder, shook its cream-white clusters over the ripening hay. The sparrows twittered and chirruped with great industry on the eaves, and the starlings preened themselves on the dovecote.



About two hundred yards from the house was a pool, small in size and shallow, but full of carp, which were at all times most difficult to catch. One side of the pool was bounded by the lane, and on the other was a field containing a savage white bull, the terror of all trespassing anglers. All day long the country urchins sat on the lane side of the pool and fished for small carp of two or three inches in length, and their persistent efforts effectually frightened the bigger fish, so that





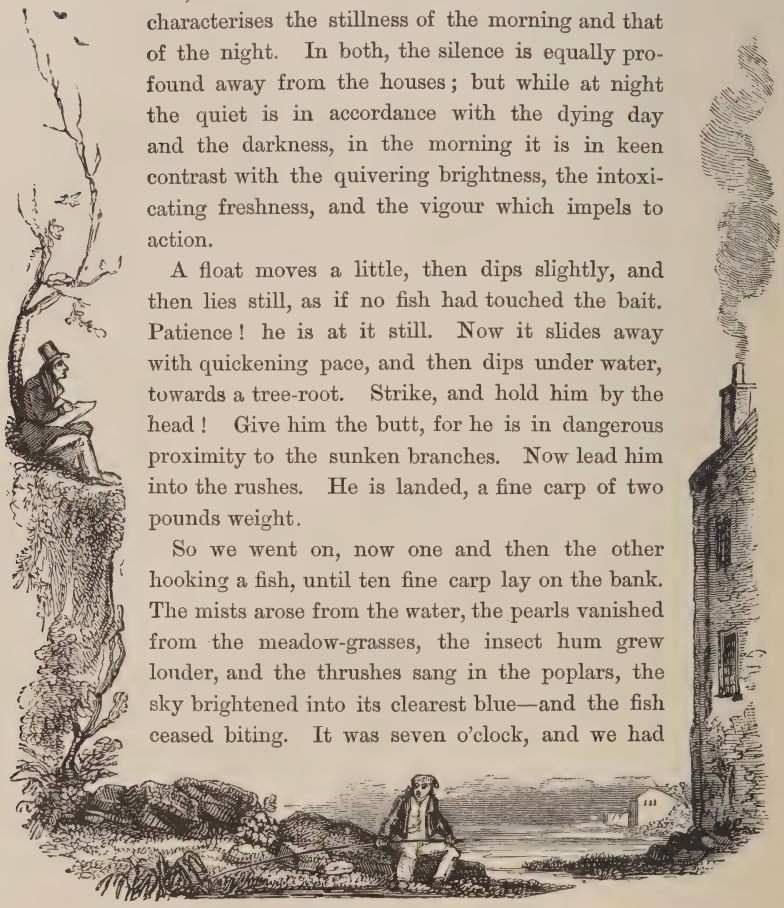
none could be caught on ordinary occasions. The previous evening a younger brother named Herbert, a lad of seventeen, had arranged with us that we should try for them early in the morning; and hence it was that we dressed hastily and "anyhow" (oh, the delight of being able to dress "anyhow"!), and left our room with the intention of waking Herbert. Our quarters were in a portion of the house separated from the rest of the inmates by a distinct staircase and doors; and when past these, we had no clear idea where his room lay. So we went prospecting, creeping stealthily with stockinged feet, lest we should rouse the house, and yet it seemed to us that every oaken plank we stepped upon had a loud and distinctive creak. Listening at one door, we heard a dual sound of breathing; at another, there was no sound at all. While standing uncertain, a third door opened, and out came Master Herbert, ready for the fray. Our first visit was to the larder, for it is a golden rule never to commence the day upon an empty stomach.

We were soon at the pool, on the surface of which thin wisps and veils of mist still slumbered. A heron stood in the marginal weeds, and was so incredulous of visitors so early, that he blinked and blinked his sleepy eyes at us in wonder, and only arose when we were within ten yards of him. Our hooks were baited with red-worms, and our lines were dropped quietly into the water, sup-

ported by the tiniest floats. While we waited and watched for the first bite, we drew in huge draughts of the exhilarating morning air, with an additional zest, because we knew that the day would turn out scorching hot. All around was very quiet and still, and we noticed what a different nature characterises the stillness of the morning and that of the night. In both, the silence is equally profound away from the houses; but while at night the quiet is in accordance with the dying day and the darkness, in the morning it is in keen contrast with the quivering brightness, the intoxicating freshness, and the vigour which impels to action.

A float moves a little, then dips slightly, and then lies still, as if no fish had touched the bait. Patience! he is at it still. Now it slides away with quickening pace, and then dips under water, towards a tree-root. Strike, and hold him by the head! Give him the butt, for he is in dangerous proximity to the sunken branches. Now lead him into the rushes. He is landed, a fine carp of two pounds weight.

So we went on, now one and then the other hooking a fish, until ten fine carp lay on the bank. The mists arose from the water, the pearls vanished from the meadow-grasses, the insect hum grew louder, and the thrushes sang in the poplars, the sky brightened into its clearest blue—and the fish ceased biting. It was seven o'clock, and we had



not done badly, yet, like Oliver, we asked for more and were admonished. The tiny sprats of carp commenced biting vigorously, and the frequent dips of our floats inspired us with delusive hopes. We had been fishing from the lane, but seeing that the bull was feeding quietly in a far corner of the field, with his head turned away from us, we climbed over the gate and went on with our fishing. Presently we heard a tramp and a bellow, and lo! there was the bull close upon us and charging valiantly. One of us scrambled headlong over the gate, just in time to dispense with the bull's assistance; and the other, whose line was fast in a root at this inopportune moment, jumped waist-deep into the pool, wading out at the other side. Our fishing was at an end, and, laughing heartily, we gathered up our spoil and departed.

The Gipsy was still sleeping the sleep of the just, and when she was awakened she was very incredulous of our early rising, seeing that in the town we were always loath to get up in the mornings.

III.—The Portrait of an Angler.

Up and down the avenue of laurels, and under the shadow of the firs, where the blackbirds are chuckling, and the doves cooing, he walks. His hands are clasped behind him, and his head is



bent in meditation while he awaits the summons to breakfast. He is tall and broad-shouldered, and is gathering flesh, as becomes a man of his years. His broad, high forehead bespeaks intellect; his mouth and chin have the impress of firmness, but in his eye there shine the kindness of heart and liberality of judgment which have made him valued as a friend, and sought for as a counsellor, through the country-side. As an angler he is one whom old Izaak would have loved, for with him angling is an idyllic pastime, a contemplative man's recreation. He has no care for the more exciting branches of the art. He cares but little for the toils of salmon-fishing, or the excitement of landing the savage pike. More to his taste is the quiet ramble by the side of a trout-stream, the seat in a punt, gudgeon-fishing, or a still, calm evening by a pool-side, angling for tench. He himself would tell you that he is an angler because of the opportunities it affords for pleasant and profitable reverie.

It was very little matter whether he caught fish or not when he went a-fishing. "Atte the leest he hath his holsom walke, and merry at his ease, a swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede floures that makyth him hungry; he heareth the melodyous harmony of fowles; he seeth the younge swaunes, heerons, ducks, cotes, and many other fowles and theyr brodes, whyche me seemyth better than all the noyse of hounds, the blaste



of hornys, and the crye of fowlis that hunters, fawkeners, and fowlers can make. And if he take fysshe, surely there is then noe man merrier than he is in his spyryte."

So the ramble in the country, its pleasant sights and sounds, the chance meeting with a friend of kindred tastes, and the conversations, rich and rare, into which those who know him well are irresistibly beguiled, make the days pass pleasantly and happily. There is a certain old-fashioned quaintness in his manner which he must have caught from his favourite *Spectator*. His friends call him Sir Roger de Coverley, and the name is an apt description. Piscator says that "angling is somewhat like poetry—men are to be born so; I mean with inclinations to it, though both may be heightened by discourse and practice; but he that hopes to be a good angler must not only bring an inquiring and observing wit, but he must bring a large measure of hope and patience, and a love and propensity to the art itself; but having once got and practised it, then doubt not but angling will prove to be so pleasant that it will prove to be, like virtue, a reward to itself."

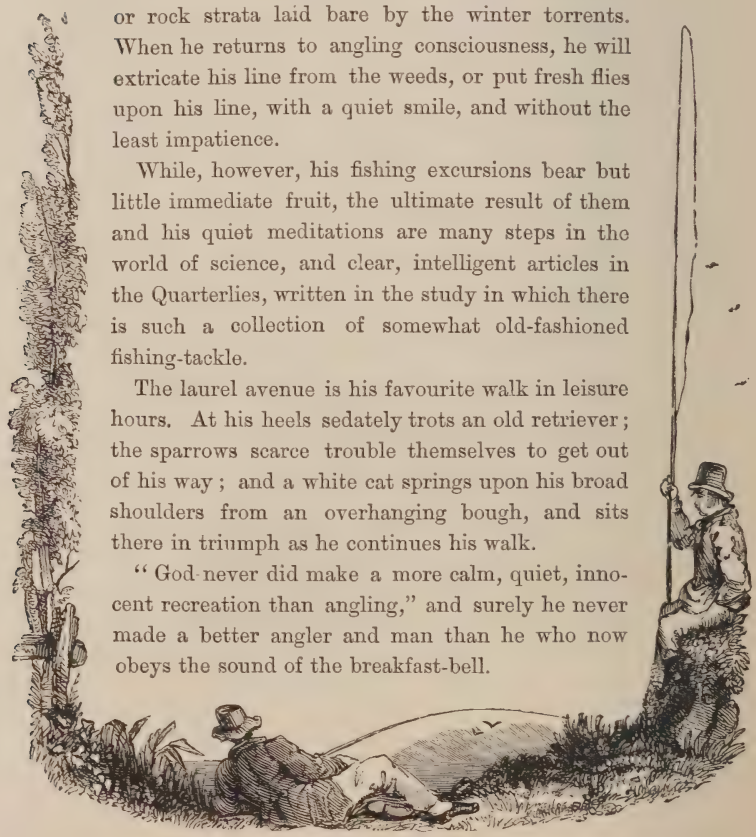
From what we have observed, we doubt that the angler whose portrait we are sketching was born to the art; we think he was rather led into its exercise by the delight he takes in its accessories; therefore he is, as a rule, not a successful angler. His pursuit of the fish themselves is not keen

enough for that, and he is too often led aside by some extraneous object. His float may be carried down, and the fish may entangle his line in the weeds, the while he is unconsciously peering at the petals of a flower through a magnifying-glass ; his rod may lie on the bank of a stream while the minnows are nibbling the feather off his flies; and he will be absorbed in the study of gravel sections or rock strata laid bare by the winter torrents. When he returns to angling consciousness, he will extricate his line from the weeds, or put fresh flies upon his line, with a quiet smile, and without the least impatience.

While, however, his fishing excursions bear but little immediate fruit, the ultimate result of them and his quiet meditations are many steps in the world of science, and clear, intelligent articles in the Quarterlies, written in the study in which there is such a collection of somewhat old-fashioned fishing-tackle.

The laurel avenue is his favourite walk in leisure hours. At his heels sedately trots an old retriever; the sparrows scarce trouble themselves to get out of his way ; and a white cat springs upon his broad shoulders from an overhanging bough, and sits there in triumph as he continues his walk.

" God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling," and surely he never made a better angler and man than he who now obeys the sound of the breakfast-bell.



IV.—On a Cottage Door.

We will wager a pot of honey to a strawberry that you never fished off a cottage door. Three of us did so one day, and this is the way of it :—

We had planned an expedition to a pool which will be no stranger to those whom we may number among our unseen friends. It is a pool on the summit of a Welsh hill, and full of carp. The weather was so hot for several days that we could not think of going there, for we knew that the carp would not bite. So we waited patiently; and, in the meantime, we fished up an old eel-spear, and went eel-spearing in the canal, with very fair success; or fly-fished for roach in the evenings, in a slowly-moving stream which ran through the meadows about a mile from the house. Then we wandered about the lanes and the woods, and gathered wild flowers, and dried and pressed them, until the multitude of those which demanded attention, from their extreme beauty or singularity, increased so that we grew confused, and eventually gave up their individual study, and admired them in the concrete. Very pleasant pictures were afforded by those broad and shady lanes. Many portions were grassy all across; all had luxuriant tangles of brambles, ferns, grasses, and flowers, over which butterflies flitted on brilliant wings. They were bordered with tall thistles, swaying under the

clinging, seed-eating goldfinches; briars, where the yellowhammer sunned his golden coat; foxgloves, whose red-purple bells bent 'neath the weight of a big bumble-bee; dark beds of nettles, from whose uninviting depths that handsome butterfly, the red-admiral, rose, hour-old from the chrysalis, and flashed his scarlet bands in the face of the dull "meadow-brown;" clumps of wild geraniums, purple and red, nodding and bowing to feathery grasses; and clusters of meadow-sweet, white and intangible as summer cloudlets, and lading the hot air with a cloying fragrance. Then there were such magnificent hedges: slender hazel rods, thickets of bronzed thorn, glossy-green hollies, and tangling briony, all so full of bird-life that the Gipsy, who had led a town life, was astounded. Criticising once a book we had written for boys, she had said: "They find birds'-nests and butterflies so pat—just as if they had been placed ready for them to find. It is not likely or natural." To which we had replied: "A country boy who has his wits about him, and has a taste for natural history, knows exactly where to look for what he wants, and will, in all probability, find it; so that there is nothing wonderful about it." But she was still incredulous, and accused us of drawing the long-bow. Now we had our revenge! After a preliminary investigation of the neighbourhood, we led her out of doors, and commenced, first of all, with the verandah itself. In the roses, round the first

supporting pillar, was a wren's nest, from which the young ones had flown; on the next was a flycatcher's, with eggs in—a second laying; on the third was another flycatcher's, with young ones in; on the fourth, a chaffinch's; on the fifth, a sparrow's; on the sixth, another flycatcher's, and so on, nearly every pillar bearing a nest. The shrubs in the garden and orchard were similarly tenanted. Thrushes' and blackbirds' nests were very common. On a ledge of the orchard wall were five young flycatchers being fed by the parent birds, and an interesting sight it was. The old birds—graceful, grey creatures they are—flew each to its own post—one the top of a stake, and the other a spade standing in the ground near to a gooseberry bush—and, after turning its head quickly to this side and that, with eyes watchful and twinkling, would dart, swallow-like, at some insect, often seizing it at the first dart, but sometimes twisting cleverly about for a few moments in pursuit; then it would bear its prey to the row of fluttering winglets, and clamorous, wide-gaping mouths on the ledge. It was a busy and pretty sight, and the Gipsy dated her first liking for natural history from it.

In the stack-yard, which was thickly carpeted with the scarlet pimpernel, was a lark's nest between two stones, and a thrush's built on a cart-wheel; and in a hole in the bank of the lane was a robin's nest—whereby hangs a tale.



The eggs had all been taken except one, and the robin hatched that one, and the pair of old birds were very assiduous in their attentions to their only child. One day we found the nest gone, and shortly afterwards, passing that way, we saw one of the old birds lying in the hole left by the removal of the nest, dead. The body was quite warm, and bore no marks of violence; and the Gipsy said it had died of a broken heart, on the place where its home had been—and, i' faith, she may not have been far wrong.

The heat increased, and as the heat increased so did the flies, so that rambling about the lanes and through the woods became almost unbearable. Yet it was wrong to grumble, for the hay was ripening fast, and was nearly ready to cut; and the corn grew straight and high and strong in the ear, so that the fields were as level as the sea in a calm, and had as many lights and shadows, and opaline changes of colour, and soft flushes of sunset. The horizon narrowed and lay suffused in a blue shade; the hills melted into indistinct outlines; the colours of the landscape grew richer and deeper; the hollows of the dark woods were lined with foxgloves; and the fresh green of June was gone for a twelvemonth longer.

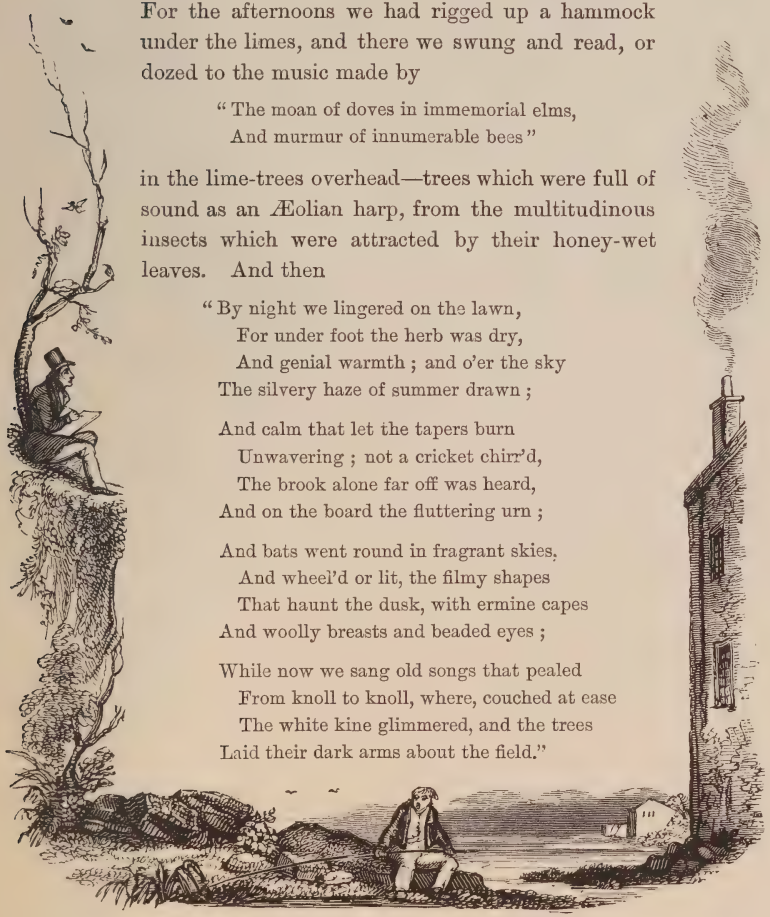
Then men waded knee-deep in the grass, and cut long lanes for the reaping-machines to get to work. The cheery clatter of the machines, and the swish of the falling hay, sounded over all the country-

side. Men grew swarthy red in the fierce heat, and the harvest beer was issued out all day long in amazing quantities. We worked in the hay in the mornings with the men, racing with each other to turn over our lines of cocks the quickest. For the afternoons we had rigged up a hammock under the limes, and there we swung and read, or dozed to the music made by

> "The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmur of innumerable bees"

in the lime-trees overhead—trees which were full of sound as an Æolian harp, from the multitudinous insects which were attracted by their honey-wet leaves. And then

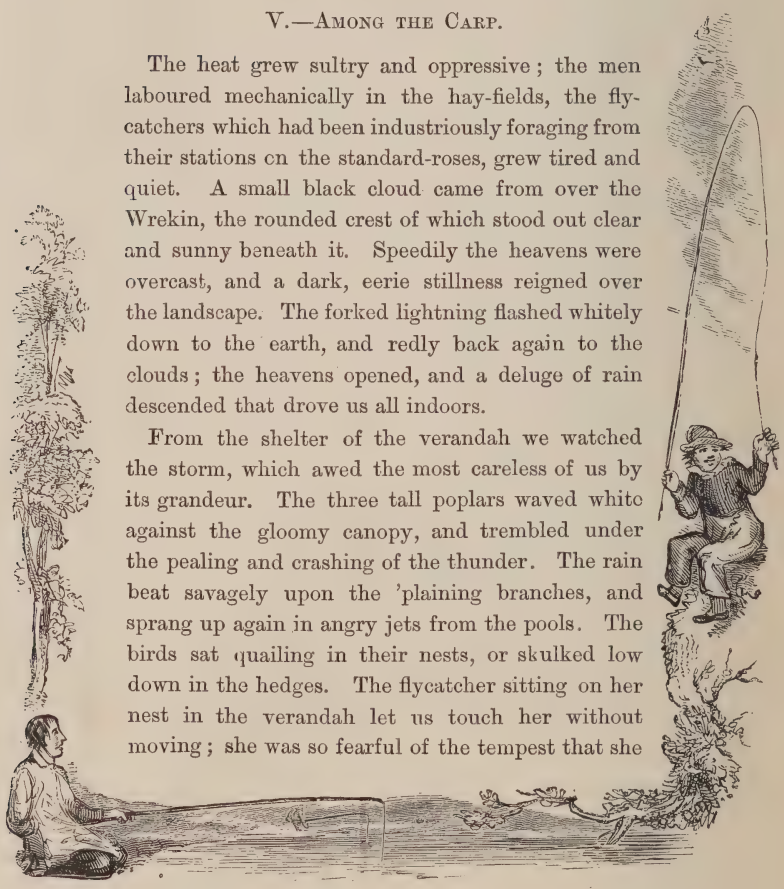
> "By night we lingered on the lawn,
> For under foot the herb was dry,
> And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
> The silvery haze of summer drawn;
>
> And calm that let the tapers burn
> Unwavering; not a cricket chirr'd,
> The brook alone far off was heard,
> And on the board the fluttering urn;
>
> And bats went round in fragrant skies,
> And wheel'd or lit, the filmy shapes
> That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
> And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;
>
> While now we sang old songs that pealed
> From knoll to knoll, where, couched at ease
> The white kine glimmered, and the trees
> Laid their dark arms about the field."



But what of the cottage door? Ah! well, we had forgotten all about it: it shall have another chapter all to itself.

V.—Among the Carp.

The heat grew sultry and oppressive; the men laboured mechanically in the hay-fields, the fly-catchers which had been industriously foraging from their stations on the standard-roses, grew tired and quiet. A small black cloud came from over the Wrekin, the rounded crest of which stood out clear and sunny beneath it. Speedily the heavens were overcast, and a dark, eerie stillness reigned over the landscape. The forked lightning flashed whitely down to the earth, and redly back again to the clouds; the heavens opened, and a deluge of rain descended that drove us all indoors.



From the shelter of the verandah we watched the storm, which awed the most careless of us by its grandeur. The three tall poplars waved white against the gloomy canopy, and trembled under the pealing and crashing of the thunder. The rain beat savagely upon the 'plaining branches, and sprang up again in angry jets from the pools. The birds sat quailing in their nests, or skulked low down in the hedges. The flycatcher sitting on her nest in the verandah let us touch her without moving; she was so fearful of the tempest that she



seemed to be glad of our company and protection. Hay-making was suspended. The hay already cut had been gathered hastily into cocks, and would not take much harm; but it was feared that the wheat would be much beaten down by the weight of the rain.

When the fierceness of the tempest had passed away, a steady rain set in, hiding not only the hills, but the near woods in its "mournful fringe." At night it grew finer, and we ventured out on the lawn with a lantern to pick up the worms which we imagined would, after rain, be crawling about in great numbers. To our astonishment there were none; the heavy rain had apparently frightened them, so that they had sunk deeper in the earth; for while gentle rain will bring them out in great numbers, "heavy wet" does not agree with them, but drives them deeper in.

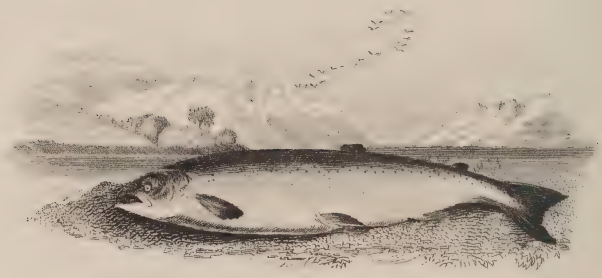
We were rather puzzled to know how we should obtain bait for the morrow, until we stumbled against an old box in which the gardener had stored some rich mould for his flower-pots. Upon emptying this we found great numbers of capital red-worms. To make assurance doubly sure, we got some gunpowder, and making a big "devil," sallied forth and stormed a wasps' nest in an adjoining lane.

The morning broke with a bright blue sky, across which the clouds were being rapidly driven by a strong breeze from the south-east. It was not the

best of days for carp-fishing, but we started, driving to the town, and then stoutly facing the five-mile walk up-hill to the pool. Over meadow, through brake, through brier, over streams, and up crags, we pushed our way, passing well-remembered spots which had known no change, and brought back to us scenes of our happy boyhood with startling clearness. The jay flew chattering through the wood as of old, the pheasant flustered, and the rabbit scuttled. On the same bank grew the same thick growth of Blechnum ferns, the redstart built in the same hole of the grey stone wall, and everything was so fresh and beautiful with the old freshness and beauty, that we began to believe that we also had not changed; and by the time we reached the lovely pool on the hill-top, we were prepared to enjoy ourselves with the old keenness, and it seemed just as if it were a Saturday half-holiday years ago.

There were three of us—the writer, his young brother Herbert, and one whom we will call the Senior—full of quips and cranks and merry jests, complaining loudly of the steepness and difficulty of the way, and stopping very often to gather the wild strawberries which grew in remarkable profusion all the way, peeping with timid blushes from their sheltering, half-concealing leaves. Herbert was but seventeen—a tall, pleasant lad, clever and thoughtful beyond his years, and with a most mad propensity for punning; and the worst of it was







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that his puns were so apt, and uttered with such quaint gravity, that one was compelled to laugh at them.

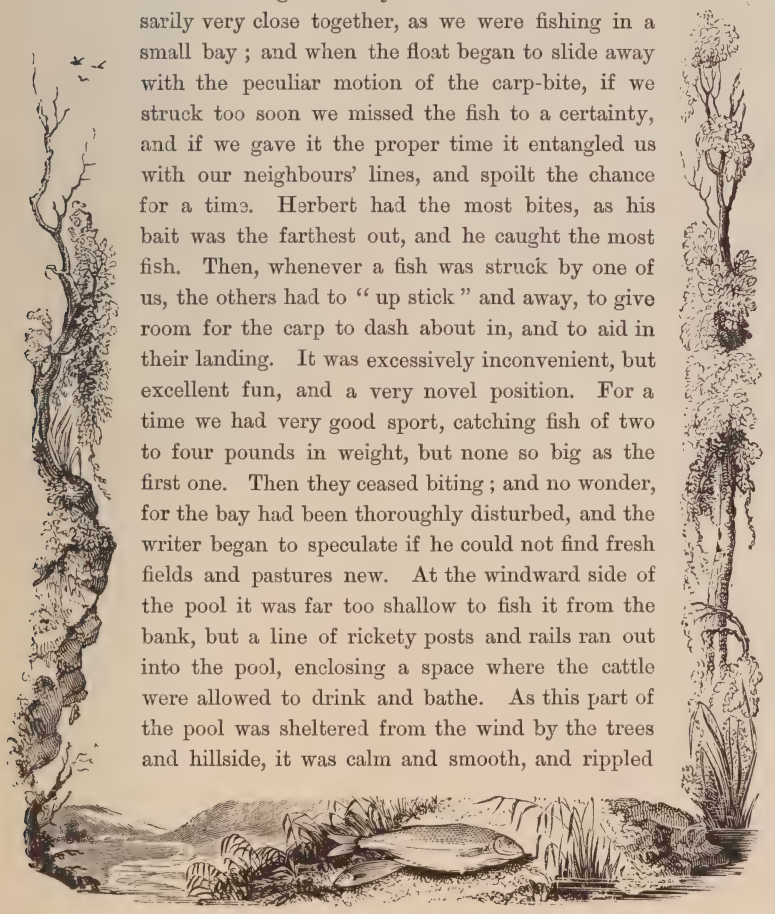
Before us lay the pool in its sheltered hollow, reed surrounded, with inner belts of rushes and the smooth water horse-tail; its surface intersected with waterhens and coots, a heron in the shallows, and wild-ducks playing on an iris-island. The very water was greenish in colour, and then it had a background of alders, and willows, and black fir-forest.

Our rods were soon together; but an unforeseen difficulty arose. The water of the pool was unusually high, and had flooded the belt of willows around, covering the few standing-places there ever had been. It was far too cold to wade, and it really seemed as if we could not get at the pool to fish it. At the only open space it was too shallow. At last we discovered a spot at the lee-side of the pool, where, by breaking down the branches of the dwarf willows, and placing a line of stepping-stones, we could just make room for one to stand. Even then there was not sufficient room to swing the rod backwards for a throw-out, and the wind was so strong that it was difficult to throw in its teeth. Herbert had brought with him a salmon-rod, which had been given to him, and which he had never before used. Knowing the usual difficulty of reaching out, he had wisely brought it with him, and he was able to commence fishing at once—his float lying twenty feet beyond ours, which reposed un-

comfortably just outside the rushes. While we were debating what we should do, Herbert's float moved away through the dancing ripples with a most decisive bite. He struck, and the carp, firmly hooked, dashed out towards the centre of the pool, taking out line like a salmon, and making the splendid rod bend and spring delightfully. After taking out fully fifty yards of line, he allowed himself to be turned, and came zigzagging back with sullen resistance, until he was close into the rushes, and then he proceeded to dash backwards and forwards, catching up both our lines, which were still in the water, and getting them into a pretty tangle. Herbert played him very steadily, though he was much excited, and at last he led him up a sort of drain, and we closed in behind him and lifted him out—a splendid fish of six pounds in weight. Leaving Herbert to re-bait, we rushed about seeking some means of getting at the pool. Not far off was a small cottage, which, upon examination, we found to be uninhabited. The garden presented a sad appearance, currant and gooseberry bushes running wild, and the beds overgrown with weeds. The door of the cottage was open, and we conceived and put into execution a capital idea. We took the door off its hinges, and collected a quantity of loose bricks. Transporting these to the pool, we speedily constructed a platform on which there was just room for the three of us to stand.



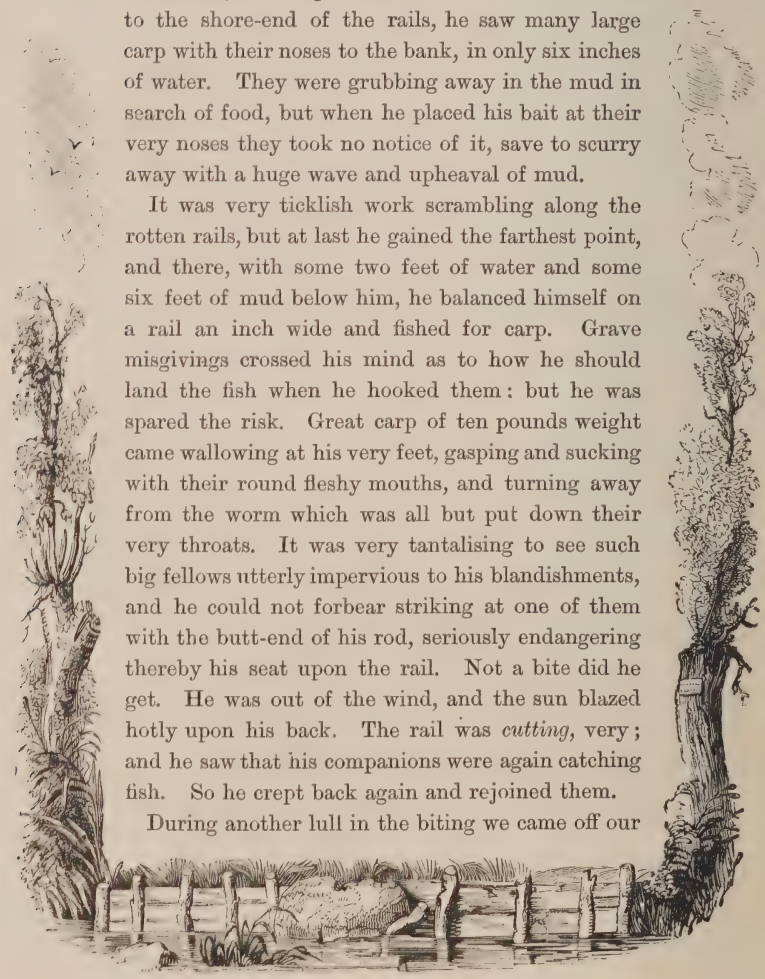
We had no lack of bites. Barely five minutes passed without one or other of us having a bite. The pool, in all probability, had not been fished for some years, and the carp were not shy. But we missed a great many. Our floats were necessarily very close together, as we were fishing in a small bay ; and when the float began to slide away with the peculiar motion of the carp-bite, if we struck too soon we missed the fish to a certainty, and if we gave it the proper time it entangled us with our neighbours' lines, and spoilt the chance for a time. Herbert had the most bites, as his bait was the farthest out, and he caught the most fish. Then, whenever a fish was struck by one of us, the others had to "up stick" and away, to give room for the carp to dash about in, and to aid in their landing. It was excessively inconvenient, but excellent fun, and a very novel position. For a time we had very good sport, catching fish of two to four pounds in weight, but none so big as the first one. Then they ceased biting ; and no wonder, for the bay had been thoroughly disturbed, and the writer began to speculate if he could not find fresh fields and pastures new. At the windward side of the pool it was far too shallow to fish it from the bank, but a line of rickety posts and rails ran out into the pool, enclosing a space where the cattle were allowed to drink and bathe. As this part of the pool was sheltered from the wind by the trees and hillside, it was calm and smooth, and rippled



only by the back fins of the huge carp sailing about. The writer thought he would scramble out upon these rails, and he proceeded to do so. As he went to the shore-end of the rails, he saw many large carp with their noses to the bank, in only six inches of water. They were grubbing away in the mud in search of food, but when he placed his bait at their very noses they took no notice of it, save to scurry away with a huge wave and upheaval of mud.

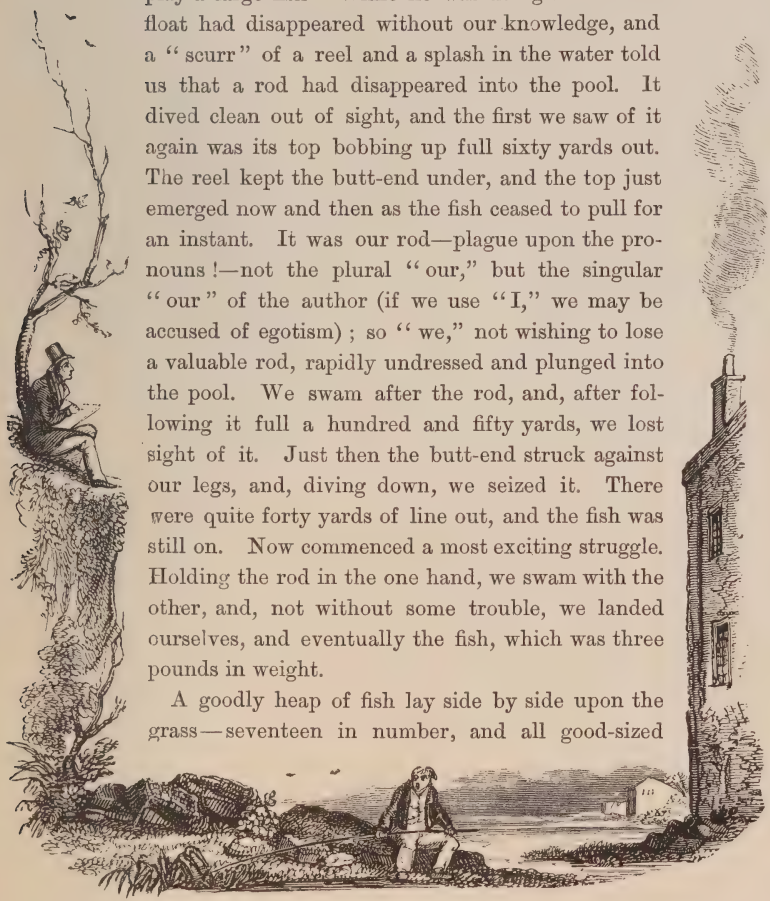
It was very ticklish work scrambling along the rotten rails, but at last he gained the farthest point, and there, with some two feet of water and some six feet of mud below him, he balanced himself on a rail an inch wide and fished for carp. Grave misgivings crossed his mind as to how he should land the fish when he hooked them: but he was spared the risk. Great carp of ten pounds weight came wallowing at his very feet, gasping and sucking with their round fleshy mouths, and turning away from the worm which was all but put down their very throats. It was very tantalising to see such big fellows utterly impervious to his blandishments, and he could not forbear striking at one of them with the butt-end of his rod, seriously endangering thereby his seat upon the rail. Not a bite did he get. He was out of the wind, and the sun blazed hotly upon his back. The rail was *cutting*, very; and he saw that his companions were again catching fish. So he crept back again and rejoined them.

During another lull in the biting we came off our



platform to get some lunch and stretch our legs a little, laying our rods down to fish for themselves, Herbert being told off to keep an eye upon them. Suddenly he rushed forward, exclaiming, "I have a bite!" and we watched him take up his rod and play a large fish. While he was doing so another float had disappeared without our knowledge, and a "scurr" of a reel and a splash in the water told us that a rod had disappeared into the pool. It dived clean out of sight, and the first we saw of it again was its top bobbing up full sixty yards out. The reel kept the butt-end under, and the top just emerged now and then as the fish ceased to pull for an instant. It was our rod—plague upon the pronouns!—not the plural "our," but the singular "our" of the author (if we use "I," we may be accused of egotism); so "we," not wishing to lose a valuable rod, rapidly undressed and plunged into the pool. We swam after the rod, and, after following it full a hundred and fifty yards, we lost sight of it. Just then the butt-end struck against our legs, and, diving down, we seized it. There were quite forty yards of line out, and the fish was still on. Now commenced a most exciting struggle. Holding the rod in the one hand, we swam with the other, and, not without some trouble, we landed ourselves, and eventually the fish, which was three pounds in weight.

A goodly heap of fish lay side by side upon the grass—seventeen in number, and all good-sized

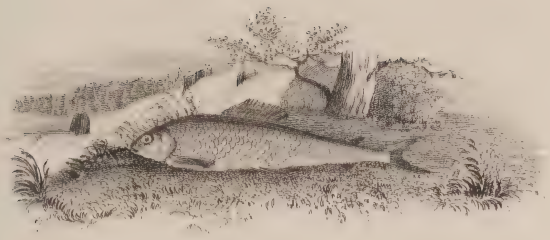


ones. There were quite as many as we could carry, so we left off fishing and rambled about gathering wild strawberries, chasing conies, seeking for young wood-pigeons wherewith to make a pie, and generally behaving ourselves in a very silly, boyish, yet happy way. In truth, the youngest of us was by far the sedatest, and looked down with calm superiority upon our elderly frolics.

A great part of the wood had been cut down since the old times, so that we could see away over a forest of foxglove to the wild Welsh hills. Silent and still they lay in the swift-chasing sunshine and shadow. Their lower sides were green with irregularly mapped-out fields, and dotted with lonely farm-houses, from which the smoke crept lazily upwards, or whirled downwards before a sudden gust of wind. The sheep were so distant and small that their motions were not observable, and they gave no life to the view, so that far as the eye could see all was still and lonely. A tiny village, clustered round an ancient church, seemed at that distance dead and deserted.

The hill-tops arrested the flying clouds that broke against them, and streamed up the glens like rivers with an upward current. The rounded outlines of the nearer hills changed in the distance to the bluff crags and bold projections of the Snowdon mountains. Over the valley the raven floated from his nest on the inaccessible cliff, and his shadow fell on the sunny fields below. The ordered con-







fusion, the solidity and the grandeur of the many hills, and the loveliness of their intersecting glens, spoke of half-savage wildness and half-barbaric freedom; yet the denizens of those sequestered farms held themselves but as serfs in bondage to a rich landowner. They claimed the independence of the Cymri, yet bowed down slavishly to the will of their landlord—and why? Because they must live, and poverty falls with the snow in these wild hill villages, and springs up with the stones in their ploughed fields—and as poverty teaches so do they learn. So that, to him who looks under the surface, the fair freshness of the hill country is too often but a painful foil to the narrow and straitened life beneath.

We had but to turn around, and there before us, for mile on mile, stretched the greater portion of four fine counties: rich plains, massy woods, silver winding streams, and landmark hills such as the Wrekin, the Breidden, Hawkstone, Longmynd, and others. There peace and plenty reigned; and comfortable homesteads, with well-filled stackyards, spoke to the gold that came from the bosom of the earth.

Around us the wind sighed loudly in the fir-trees, and the ripples washed among the reeds. There was no sound of man or domestic animal—nothing save our own voices, and the croak of the coots, and cackle of wild-ducks, and noises in the wood which were hard to assign to their natural causes.



The excitement of the sport being over, the place seemed uncanny, and we quickly divided our spoil into three bundles and started homewards. We were heavily laden, and long ere the five miles were passed we were thoroughly fagged. The waggonette was waiting for us, and the Gipsy was there too. "So you have caught some fish at last!" she cried; "I am glad to see that you *can* catch them sometimes." She is very incredulous, is the Gipsy, about our piscatory feats.



VI.—Kitten-fishing.

"Little things please little minds" is a proverb which will perhaps explain the present doings of three boy-men who are sitting under the verandah. Possibly, also, the hot sun has turned their brains.

A few days ago we were all passing through the farmyard, when Herbert ran in advance of us into a building, and presently out of the holes in one of those diamond-shaped places in the wall, where alternate bricks are left out for the purpose of ventilation, there peeped the heads of six kittens, gazing inquisitively down upon us. The Gipsy uttered a cry of delight, and very soon had gathered all six of them in the folds of her dress. They were very pretty little kittens: one a pure white with one spot, which was named "Spot;" two of a golden brown, which were







always mistaken for each other, and were collectively named "Bronze;" a tabby, a black, and a grey one of great beauty, called "Chin," from its likeness to chinchilla fur. They were intended to be brought up about the farm-buildings to keep down the mice, and they had never been in the house. The Gipsy took them under her especial care while she remained at Rosesbower, and the consequence was that they were always in the house, curled up on the chairs one wished to sit down upon, or chasing the croquet-balls, or climbing up the standard-roses trying to catch the flycatchers. The grey one was the Gipsy's especial favourite, and Herbert got into her black books because he, one day, floured it all over, and took it to her as a new kitten, and she began to pet it, and did not discover the deception until her hands and dress were all over flour.

Now, as we (the singular) lie in the hammock studying (well, reading a novel!), the six kittens are all on the lawn, wild for play, and there are three men with fishing-rods on the verandah, and to the ends of their lines are tied corks; and with these corks they are angling for the kittens, which seize the bait, and tug away at it, and run out line most bravely. Nor do they let go until they are dragged in to the very feet of the anglers. It is a very fair imitation of fishing, and it has this advantage—that the anglees like it as well as the anglers. The Gipsy is present, and is looking very

doubtfully at the sport. She thinks it hurts the kittens' teeth, and is half disposed to interfere.

Dear me! this is very pleasant. A light wind has set the hammock a-swinging, the bees hum drowsily in the limes, and—ah, yes; we are not sleepy, but it is pleasant to close the eyes—the translucent green of the leaves above us, and the flicker of the sunlight through them, is rather dazzling.

"You've been asleep for an hour, and the dinner-bell is ringing."

"Eh! what? Impossible! Who put all the kittens in the hammock? There is one asleep across our throat. We were in fairyland, but

> 'A touch, a kiss—the charm was snapt;
> There rose a noise of striking clocks,
> And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
> And barking dogs, and crowing cocks.'

You call us from the shades Elysian to the clang of the dinner-bell and a smell of roast mutton. Shame upon you!"

VII.—The Meres.

We made two excursions to the Mere district, at Ellesmere. For the enlightenment of those who are not acquainted with this lovely district, we may mention that in the north of Shropshire, in a prettily undulating and well-wooded country, are





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seven lakes, or meres, of various sizes. The largest is at Ellesmere, and gives its name to a very quiet and sleepy town on its banks. It is about 120 acres in extent, and although it is a good deal fished, yet it still abounds in all kinds of fish that love still waters. In our younger days the meres were our favourite places of resort. In no other place was there so much natural history to be done, so many interesting facts to be observed, and so much sport to be had. We boated on their waters; we caught large pike and perch out of their weedy depths; and in their tall marginal reeds the reedwren built its purse-like nest, the coot and the wild-duck bred there; and the untidy, soaking-wet nests of the great-crested grebe were not uncommon. Over the adjoining woods the osprey and peregrine had been known to seek their prey; the woodpecker and the wryneck, the sparrow-hawk, the kestrel, and the jay all nested in the old trees; and the keepers were indulgent to well-behaved boys—such as, of course, we were. Hence our visits to the meres were very frequent; and whether we floated on their stilly bosoms on hot summer days, or skated around their margins, watching the tracks of wild creatures on the snow, we always came away having learnt something fresh and reaped some new enjoyment.

Hence a holiday in their neighbourhood could not be spent without again visiting them, for the sake of auld-lang-syne. We wished, too, to show the Gipsy the pleasant haunts of our boyhood, of

which she had so often heard us speak. So one day we drove her there. We halted on the top of a hill called the Brow, to show her the fairest view she yet had seen. We were on the highest corn-growing land in England, and it was a "far view" that unfolded itself to our gaze. The fair English plain; the bold bluffs of the Wrekin, the Briedden, and the Caradocs; the fringe of Welsh hills; the sheets of water shining out of the hearts of the woods, showed themselves to the best advantage on that still summer day. Then we drove down a steep descent, and entered the old-fashioned little town, which looked as if neither it nor its inhabitants had hurried themselves for many a century.

Encircled by woods, the lake lay calm and glassy, and the swans "floated double, swan and shadow." There was not a quiver on the broad surface of the lake, save that caused by the prow of our boat, as we rudely broke into the calm. The Gipsy was enchanted, and we were satisfied with the impressions our beloved Mere had produced.

We tried fishing, but, with the *extraordinary* ill-luck that *always* accompanies us whenever we take the Gipsy to watch us fishing, we had no sport, a perch of six inches long being our only capture. The carp we had caught a day or two before had nearly re-established our lost reputation as an angler; but the failure this time, lost us that which we gained by the carp, and the Gipsy spoke most contemptuously of our capabilities. We said it





was too hot and still. She replied that we had last told her, as an excuse, that the day had been too cold and rough. So we were silenced

At our next visit we were more fortunate. Three of us went, all of the male sex, and for convenience we will distinguish ourselves as Piscator, Viator, and Herbert. A sailing-boat was placed at our disposal, and as we embarked and proceeded to set the canvas, we feared there would be no wind; but soon across the mere there shot a broad line of light, and we knew that its surface was there gently rippled by a shaft of wind that came down between the gap in yonder wood. Then, as we cast adrift from the buoy, the surface of the water around us was turned into curling ripples, as the first indications of the breeze caught the floating particles and whisked them about, the sails filled, and ere long we were curtseying to a nice breeze, and the mere seemed to contract in size as it was covered with dancing wavelets. Viator steered, Herbert managed the sheets, and Piscator put his pike-rod together, and mounted one of those American kill-devils—spoon-baits painted red one side, and with a tuft of red wool dangling behind. Such baits are quite as killing as the natural bait on Ellesmere, provided there is a good breeze. Piscator let some thirty yards of line run out, and then the bait trailed astern,—Viator letting the wind slide out of the sails, to prevent our going too fast.

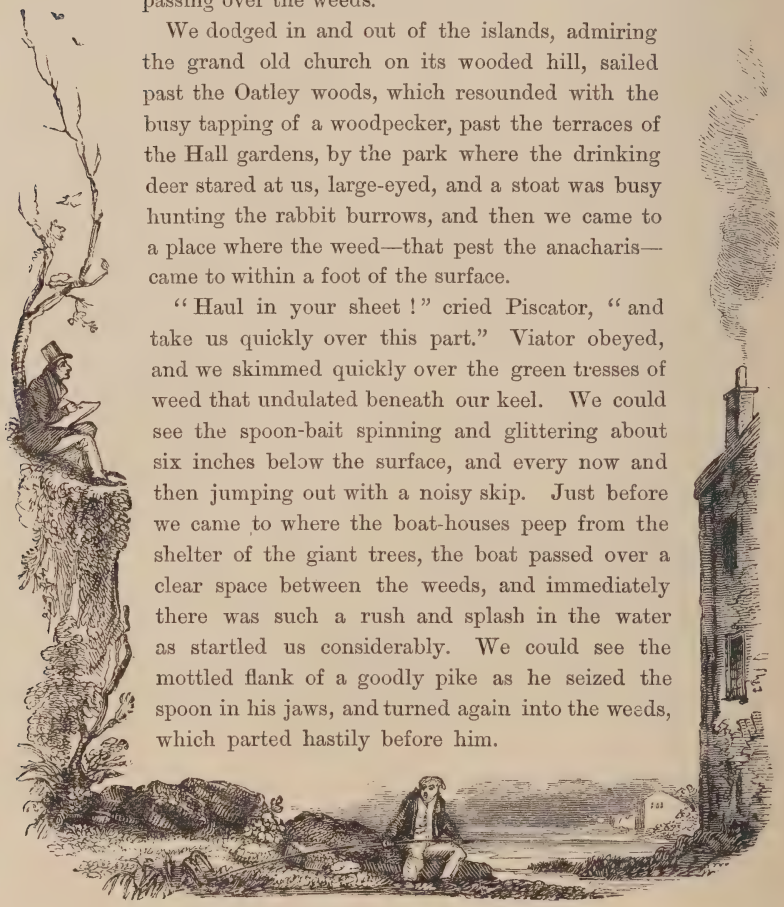


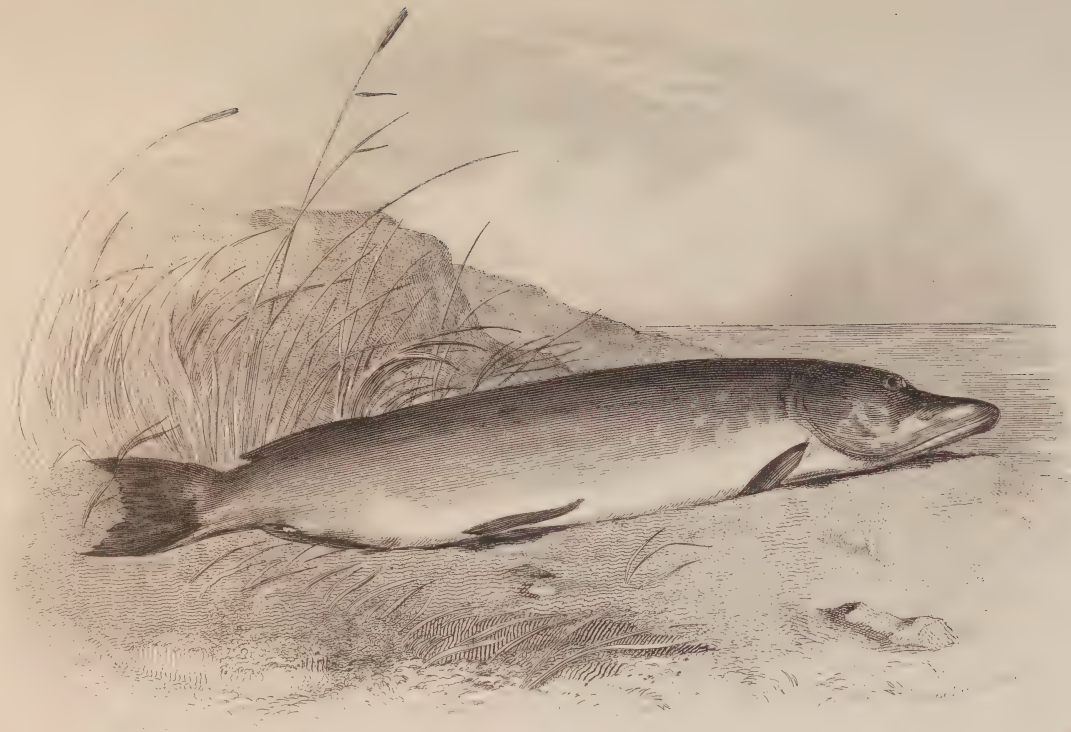
"I say," exclaimed Viator, "what are we to do if you hook a big pike?"

"Bring the boat up into the wind as soon as you can," replied Piscator, raising his rod so that the bait might spin close to the top as we were passing over the weeds.

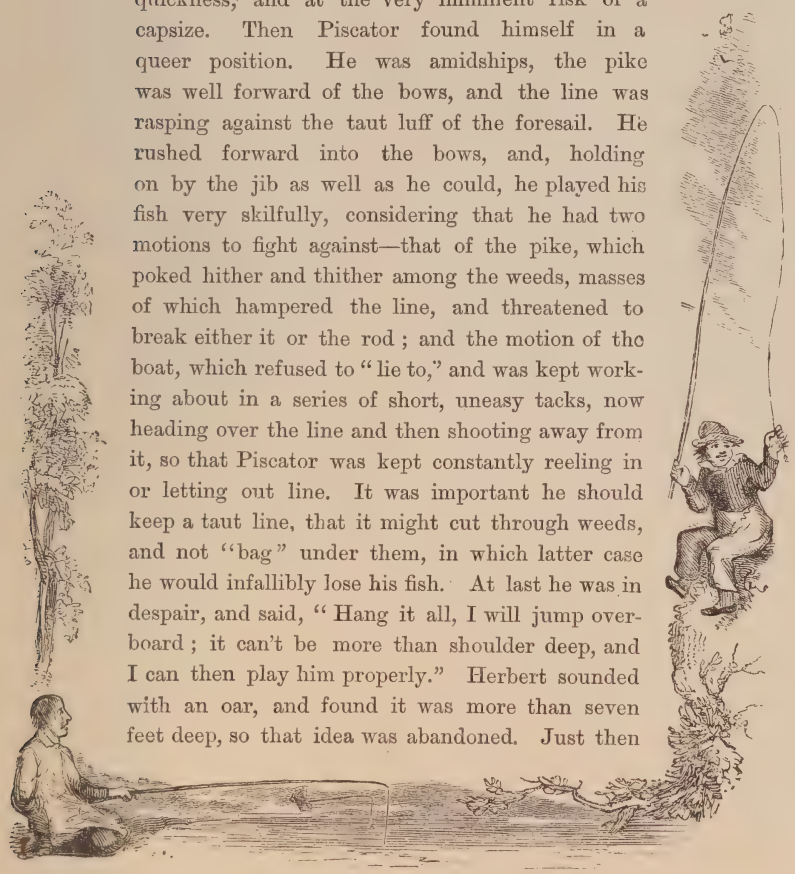
We dodged in and out of the islands, admiring the grand old church on its wooded hill, sailed past the Oatley woods, which resounded with the busy tapping of a woodpecker, past the terraces of the Hall gardens, by the park where the drinking deer stared at us, large-eyed, and a stoat was busy hunting the rabbit burrows, and then we came to a place where the weed—that pest the anacharis—came to within a foot of the surface.

"Haul in your sheet!" cried Piscator, "and take us quickly over this part." Viator obeyed, and we skimmed quickly over the green tresses of weed that undulated beneath our keel. We could see the spoon-bait spinning and glittering about six inches below the surface, and every now and then jumping out with a noisy skip. Just before we came to where the boat-houses peep from the shelter of the giant trees, the boat passed over a clear space between the weeds, and immediately there was such a rush and splash in the water as startled us considerably. We could see the mottled flank of a goodly pike as he seized the spoon in his jaws, and turned again into the weeds, which parted hastily before him.





"Let her luff!" shouted Piscator. We were going before the wind, and going at a good pace, but Viator put the helm hard over, and, hauling in the sheet at the same time, he brought the boat into the eye of the wind with astonishing quickness, and at the very imminent risk of a capsize. Then Piscator found himself in a queer position. He was amidships, the pike was well forward of the bows, and the line was rasping against the taut luff of the foresail. He rushed forward into the bows, and, holding on by the jib as well as he could, he played his fish very skilfully, considering that he had two motions to fight against—that of the pike, which poked hither and thither among the weeds, masses of which hampered the line, and threatened to break either it or the rod; and the motion of the boat, which refused to "lie to," and was kept working about in a series of short, uneasy tacks, now heading over the line and then shooting away from it, so that Piscator was kept constantly reeling in or letting out line. It was important he should keep a taut line, that it might cut through weeds, and not "bag" under them, in which latter case he would infallibly lose his fish. At last he was in despair, and said, "Hang it all, I will jump overboard; it can't be more than shoulder deep, and I can then play him properly." Herbert sounded with an oar, and found it was more than seven feet deep, so that idea was abandoned. Just then



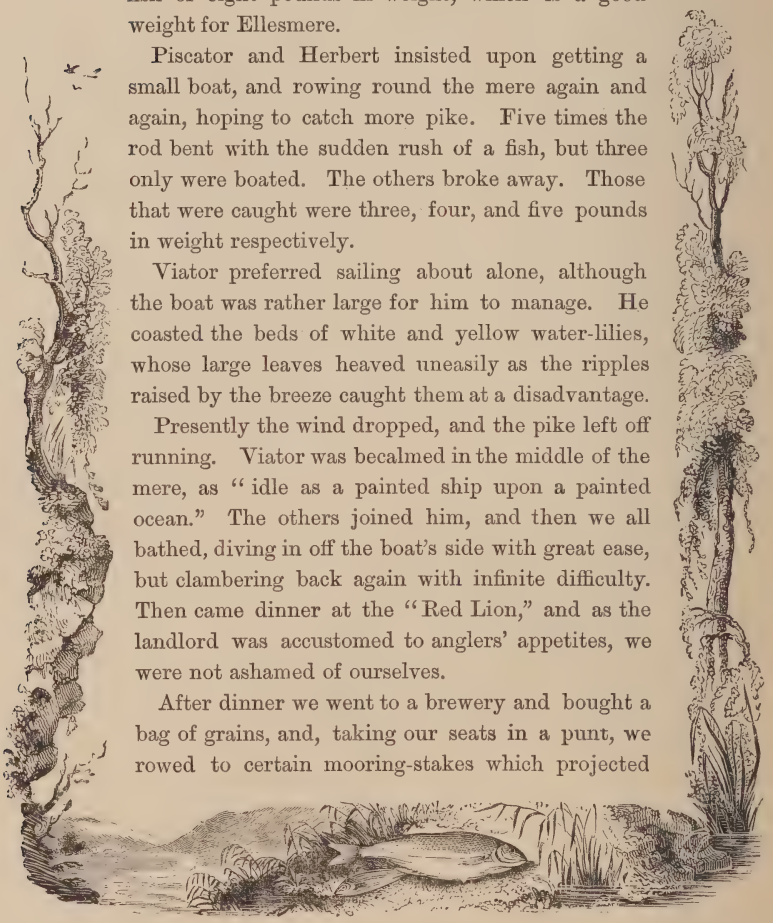
the pike came wallowing to the surface dead-beat, with gaping jaws and glaring eyes. Viator steered right up to him, and Herbert caught him by the gills and hauled him on board. It was a well-fed fish of eight pounds in weight, which is a good weight for Ellesmere.

Piscator and Herbert insisted upon getting a small boat, and rowing round the mere again and again, hoping to catch more pike. Five times the rod bent with the sudden rush of a fish, but three only were boated. The others broke away. Those that were caught were three, four, and five pounds in weight respectively.

Viator preferred sailing about alone, although the boat was rather large for him to manage. He coasted the beds of white and yellow water-lilies, whose large leaves heaved uneasily as the ripples raised by the breeze caught them at a disadvantage.

Presently the wind dropped, and the pike left off running. Viator was becalmed in the middle of the mere, as "idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." The others joined him, and then we all bathed, diving in off the boat's side with great ease, but clambering back again with infinite difficulty. Then came dinner at the "Red Lion," and as the landlord was accustomed to anglers' appetites, we were not ashamed of ourselves.

After dinner we went to a brewery and bought a bag of grains, and, taking our seats in a punt, we rowed to certain mooring-stakes which projected



out of the water at the mouth of a quiet bay. Emptying our bag of grains into the water to act as ground-bait, we baited one line with paste, another with worms, and rigged up a third with a large float and live-bait tackle, upon which the first small roach caught was impaled. The grains attracted the roach, and the roach attracted the perch and pike. With our rods projecting over the side, and the smoke curling up from the pipes of peace, we set ourselves to enjoy the quiet of the evening.

Behind us was the calm circle of the bay, fringed with reeds and rushes, and decked with the yellow flower of the flag and the white water-crowsfoot. The water-lilies, white and yellow, the arrowheads, and the pink fleshy spikes of the persicaria, filled up the whole of the bay; and in the clear interspaces the water-hens, coots, and dabchicks swam, nodded, and dived, with great disregard of our presence. Before us lay the lake, placid and mirror-like, its surface only disturbed by the water-fowl, or the circles of the rising fish. A little way off a shoal of tench had come to the surface, and were splashing and sucking with great clumsiness and much noise The swallows and martins wheeled and darted above us, or descended and dipped in the water with delicate touch; and from the church-tower the swifts darted with great rapidity, swept around us with piercing scream, and were far away. Ever and anon there came from the distance a swell of dance-music that filled the listening air with sweet

snatches of sound. We wondered whence it came, and enjoyed it the more for its mystery.

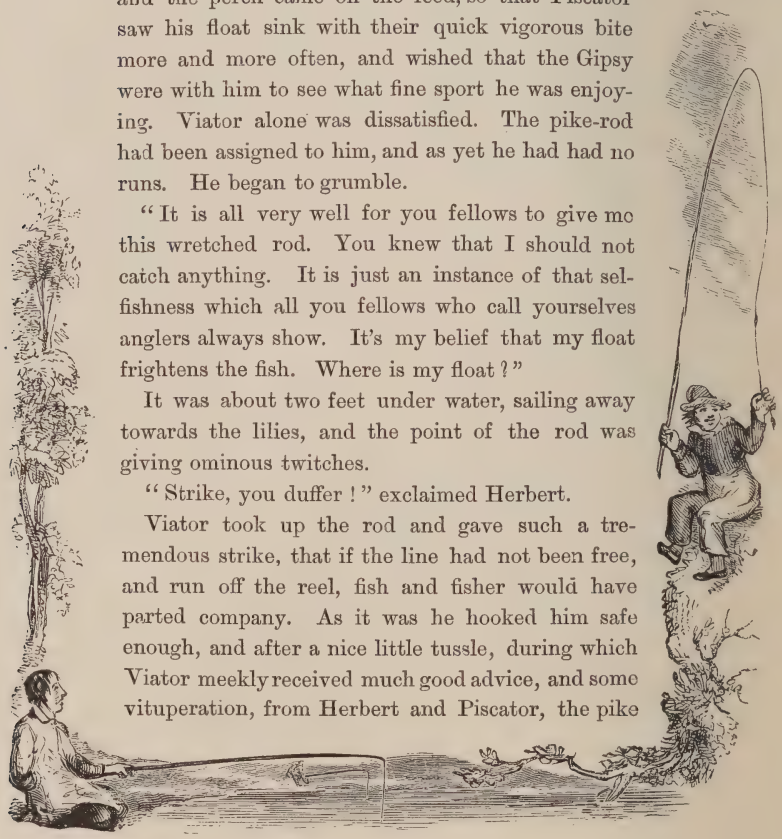
Herbert was fishing with paste, and his float began to show symptoms of liveliness, dipping with the quick bites of small roach. As the evening advanced the roach that he caught were bigger, and the perch came on the feed, so that Piscator saw his float sink with their quick vigorous bite more and more often, and wished that the Gipsy were with him to see what fine sport he was enjoying. Viator alone was dissatisfied. The pike-rod had been assigned to him, and as yet he had had no runs. He began to grumble.

"It is all very well for you fellows to give me this wretched rod. You knew that I should not catch anything. It is just an instance of that selfishness which all you fellows who call yourselves anglers always show. It's my belief that my float frightens the fish. Where is my float?"

It was about two feet under water, sailing away towards the lilies, and the point of the rod was giving ominous twitches.

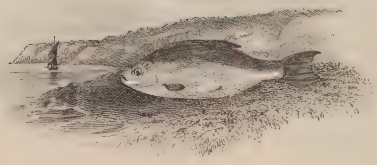
"Strike, you duffer!" exclaimed Herbert.

Viator took up the rod and gave such a tremendous strike, that if the line had not been free, and run off the reel, fish and fisher would have parted company. As it was he hooked him safe enough, and after a nice little tussle, during which Viator meekly received much good advice, and some vituperation, from Herbert and Piscator, the pike





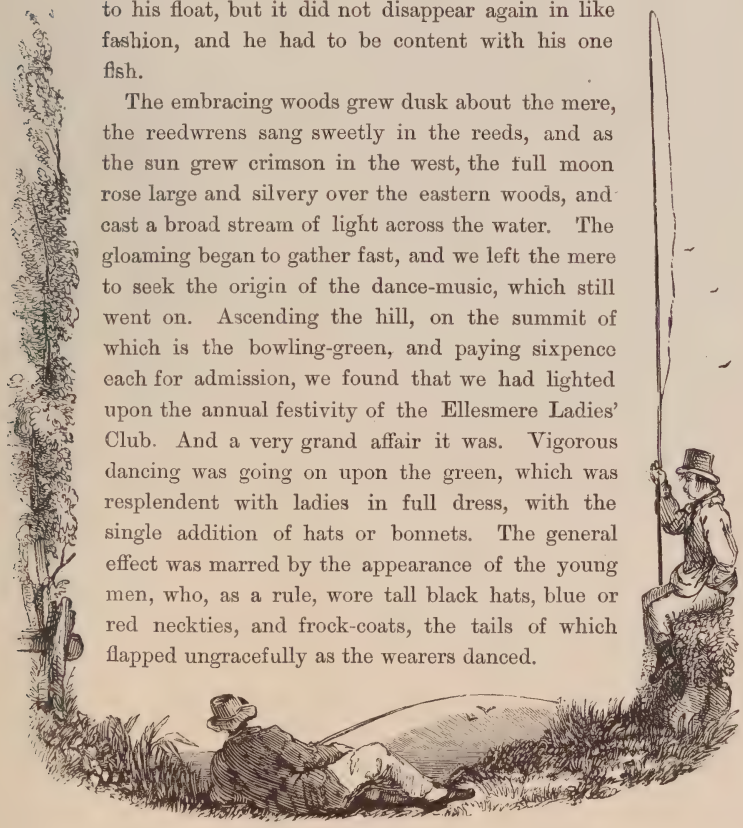




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was safely got on board. It was prime fun to see Viator. The man who professed to look down upon fishing and fishers with supreme contempt, was boyishly pleased with his capture. He turned it over, tried its weight, poked it with his finger, and stroked it again and again with great pride and affection, to the amusement of the other two. After that, too, he paid most assiduous attention to his float, but it did not disappear again in like fashion, and he had to be content with his one fish.

The embracing woods grew dusk about the mere, the reedwrens sang sweetly in the reeds, and as the sun grew crimson in the west, the full moon rose large and silvery over the eastern woods, and cast a broad stream of light across the water. The gloaming began to gather fast, and we left the mere to seek the origin of the dance-music, which still went on. Ascending the hill, on the summit of which is the bowling-green, and paying sixpence each for admission, we found that we had lighted upon the annual festivity of the Ellesmere Ladies' Club. And a very grand affair it was. Vigorous dancing was going on upon the green, which was resplendent with ladies in full dress, with the single addition of hats or bonnets. The general effect was marred by the appearance of the young men, who, as a rule, wore tall black hats, blue or red neckties, and frock-coats, the tails of which flapped ungracefully as the wearers danced.



The three fishermen felt ashamed of their rough-and-ready costume—straw hats and boating flannels; but conquering their natural modesty, Viator and Herbert secured partners; and Piscator, reflecting that the Gipsy could not see him, secured a pretty girl, and was soon whirling about the smooth lawn as madly as any of them.

VIII.—Coedyrallt.

We stood upon the summit of a cliff, and far below us the sacred river Dee flowed, with a current that from this height seemed to be tranquil and smooth, but we knew that the occasional glitter and sparkle told of a rapid, and that the patches of snow-white foam were boiling cascades.

Immediately below was the precipitous rock, seamed by many crevices, and broken by many crags, between which the dark yew trees grew and the ivy climbed. Below the rock was a steep descent, thickly wooded with oak, intermingled with larch; and there beneath its fringe of trees the river ran—the sacred Dee, by which all good Cymri swear. From the mountain springs beyond Llyn Tegid, or Bala lake, the river takes its rise. It flows through the lake from one end to the other, with a separate current they say, which is abundantly proved by the supposed fact that while salmon abound in the river, and gwyniad in





the lake, yet never are any salmon found in the lake out of the centre current, and never are the gwyniad found in the current of the river. From the mountain-guarded lake the "Deva, wizard-haunted stream," hurries along, past Druid's stone and ancient abbey, towering hills and level meads, through the happy valley of which we shall speak hereafter; and here it is under the wooded cliffs of Coedyrallt, whence it slips away with broadening current under the flying arches of the Pontycysyllte Aqueduct, past the old city of Chester, to the sea.

A vertical sun poured down a flood of light that streamed downwards below us over the warm, grey rocks, dashing from leaf to leaf of the glossy ivy, so that the face of the cliff shone as if it were covered with the silvery spray of a waterfall, and falling upon the tree-tops that in rounded masses stood out from mysterious depths of shade, cool and green, on the slope to the river. On the other side of the stream, open meadows rose gradually to the base of other hills; down the river valley to the left, beyond the woods of Wynnstay, were the inner Welsh hills, rising one beyond another with faint blue outlines, while in the foreground the steep conical hill of Dinas Bran rose ruin-crowned and boldly.

The sun was hot, and a south-west breeze scarcely cooled the air; the faint scent of the larches rose up to us from the steaming wood; the river murmured with a sleepy murmur; no white cloud

floated in the sky, no sound was heard save the lowing of the cattle standing knee-deep in the shallows; it was noon on a hot summer's day, and we sat on the top of a cliff viewing a fair scene—what wonder then that one of us, feeling within himself the poetry of the scene, and unable to express it in his own words, broke into the words of another? Seated with his back against a rock, and his eyes half closed, he repeated with soft-syllabled voice, "The Lotos Eaters," and part of it was very apt :—

"All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream;
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon,
And like a downward smoke the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall, and pause, and fall did seem.
A land of streams! Some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd; and dew'd with showery drops,
Upclomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse."

"Where is Herbert?" cried the Gipsy, who was of a more practical turn than any of us.

Viator, who was spouting the poetry, looked disgusted at the interruption. Herbert's absence did not warrant the spoiling of the display of his best recitative powers, he thought. But the Gipsy had





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some reason for the question. The rustling of yew branches and the shaking of ivy tendrils below us, indicated the whereabouts of Herbert. He had seen a stock-dove fly to a ledge below him, and from her movements suspected that there was a nest there; so down he went, to the imminent risk of his neck, and presently came up again, clinging to the ivy like a cat, and with two nearly full-grown stock-doves slung in his handkerchief.

"What are you going to do with those, you naughty boy?" quoth the Gipsy.

"Eat them," replied he laconically; "I'll cook them myself in the tool-house."

We sought a steep path that wound delicately around and under a crag, and by its means we reached the foot of the cliff, and plunged at once into a bath of coolness and freshness.

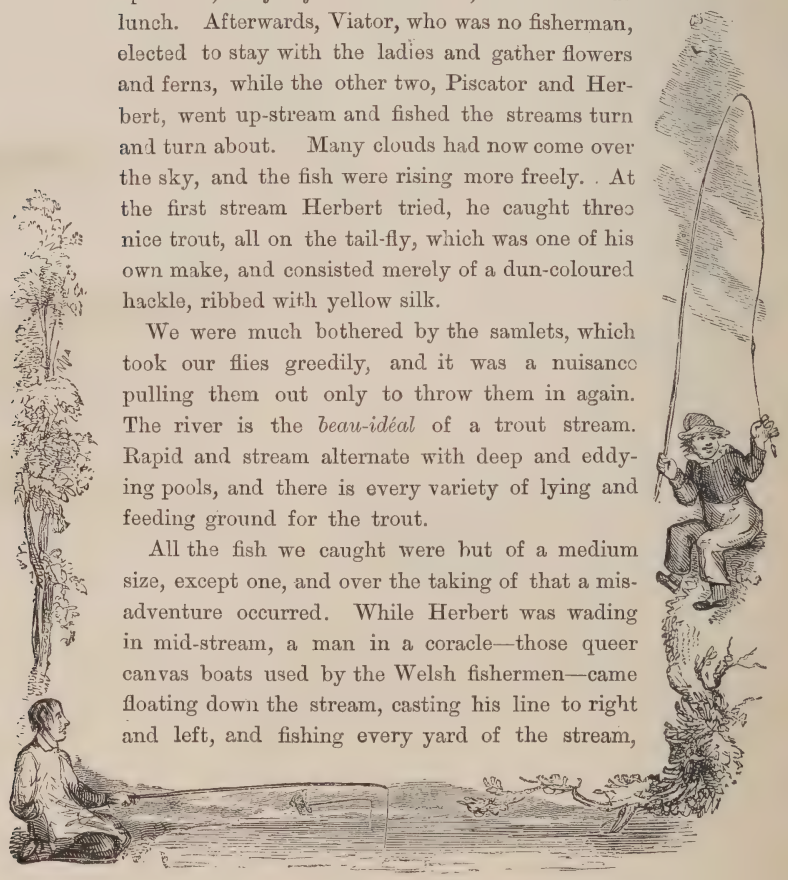
> "There were cool mosses deep,
> And through the moss the ivies crept;"

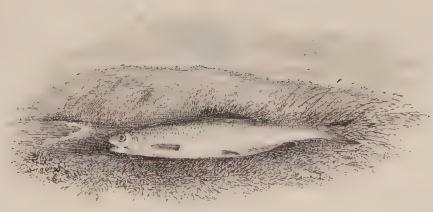
and as we went down and down, scrambling and falling over stones and tree roots, passing through a forest of the most luxuriant hartstongue ferns we ever saw. From every little crag and mossy bank they waved their long, graceful fronds, and looked so green and damp and cool that it was a feast to the eyes to dwell upon them. As we neared the river, and the woods were more open, the glades were covered with strawberries, and we picked and ate them greedily.

Then we reached the river, and, as it was too hot and bright to fish, the men left the ladies in a cool, sequestered spot to rest themselves, and went down the stream until they came to a place where it was possible to bathe, and, after that most refreshing operation, they rejoined the ladies, and we ate our lunch. Afterwards, Viator, who was no fisherman, elected to stay with the ladies and gather flowers and ferns, while the other two, Piscator and Herbert, went up-stream and fished the streams turn and turn about. Many clouds had now come over the sky, and the fish were rising more freely. At the first stream Herbert tried, he caught three nice trout, all on the tail-fly, which was one of his own make, and consisted merely of a dun-coloured hackle, ribbed with yellow silk.

We were much bothered by the samlets, which took our flies greedily, and it was a nuisance pulling them out only to throw them in again. The river is the *beau-idéal* of a trout stream. Rapid and stream alternate with deep and eddying pools, and there is every variety of lying and feeding ground for the trout.

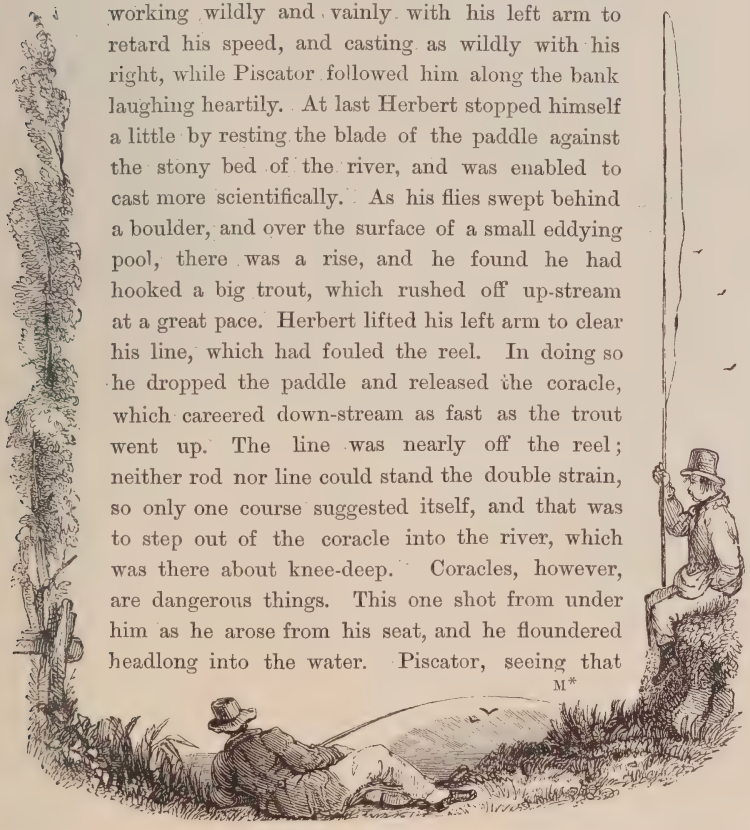
All the fish we caught were but of a medium size, except one, and over the taking of that a misadventure occurred. While Herbert was wading in mid-stream, a man in a coracle—those queer canvas boats used by the Welsh fishermen—came floating down the stream, casting his line to right and left, and fishing every yard of the stream,







retarding his downward progress meanwhile by working his paddle with one arm in a figure-of-eight stroke, or resting it against the gravel. Herbert unceremoniously stopped him, and, after a little palaver, the man consented to Herbert's taking his place in the coracle, while he waded. No sooner was Herbert installed in the coracle than he went floating down-stream at a great rate, working wildly and vainly with his left arm to retard his speed, and casting as wildly with his right, while Piscator followed him along the bank laughing heartily. At last Herbert stopped himself a little by resting the blade of the paddle against the stony bed of the river, and was enabled to cast more scientifically. As his flies swept behind a boulder, and over the surface of a small eddying pool, there was a rise, and he found he had hooked a big trout, which rushed off up-stream at a great pace. Herbert lifted his left arm to clear his line, which had fouled the reel. In doing so he dropped the paddle and released the coracle, which careered down-stream as fast as the trout went up. The line was nearly off the reel; neither rod nor line could stand the double strain, so only one course suggested itself, and that was to step out of the coracle into the river, which was there about knee-deep. Coracles, however, are dangerous things. This one shot from under him as he arose from his seat, and he floundered headlong into the water. Piscator, seeing that



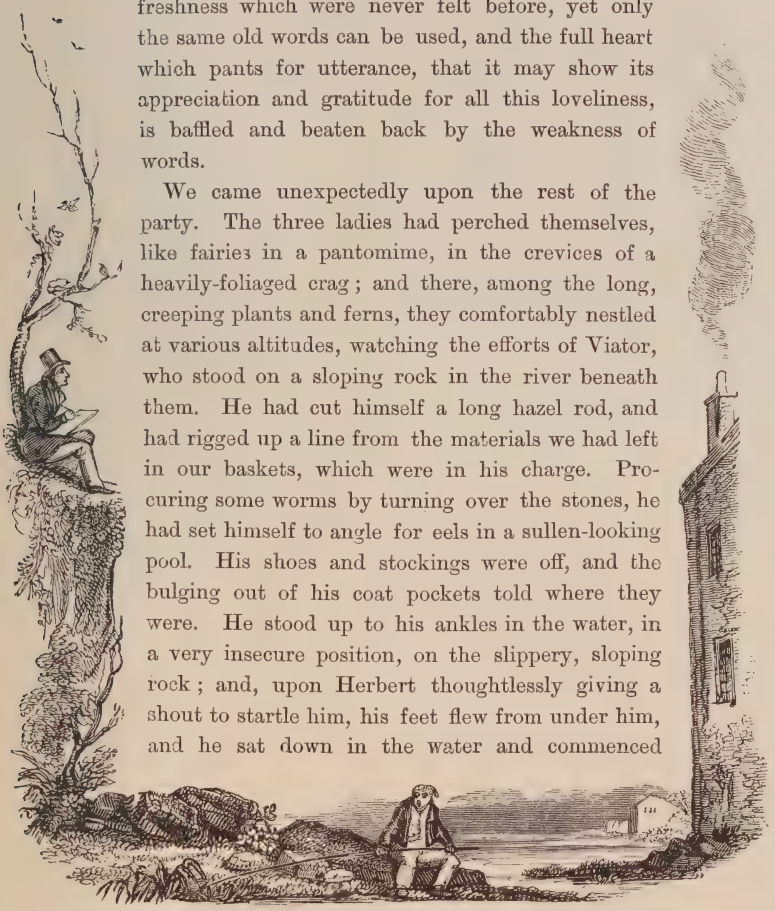


he rose to his feet all right, ran on to intercept the coracle, which was half full of water; and Herbert, looking about as handsome as a wet cat, played and landed his trout without much difficulty.

The afternoon passed pleasantly away, like all trout-fishing afternoons should do. There were all the elements of enjoyment: a sunny sky crossed by soft clouds, a south-west wind that, blowing down Bala lake, had raised the river to a fishable height; the dipper flew from stone to stone, and dived in the quick current; more than one king-fisher flashed its brilliant hues along the stream; the ring-dove cooed in the wood, and flew down to the river marge to drink; the sand-martins wheeled in mazy evolutions over the pools; the pert water-wagtails ran over the sandbanks, and were as proud of their tails as a peacock; and the river babbled over flashing shallows, and moaned in dark pools that slowly eddied under overhanging branches. No pen can describe the fresh beauty of the scene; the blue of the distant reaches of the river was as intense as that of the sky; the green of the shady hollows of the wood was ethereal in its vividness; the flowers were like fixed butterflies, and the butterflies like winged flowers. No one can better know the poverty of language than he who attempts to picture the exceeding beauty of a scene like that and a day like that. His labour becomes but a repetition of vain words, which cease to have any

meaning when we compare them with the things they are meant to describe. The sky is blue, the woods are green, the earth is fair—is all that he can say; and although in each new scene, and each time the old is viewed, there is a newness and freshness which were never felt before, yet only the same old words can be used, and the full heart which pants for utterance, that it may show its appreciation and gratitude for all this loveliness, is baffled and beaten back by the weakness of words.

We came unexpectedly upon the rest of the party. The three ladies had perched themselves, like fairies in a pantomime, in the crevices of a heavily-foliaged crag; and there, among the long, creeping plants and ferns, they comfortably nestled at various altitudes, watching the efforts of Viator, who stood on a sloping rock in the river beneath them. He had cut himself a long hazel rod, and had rigged up a line from the materials we had left in our baskets, which were in his charge. Procuring some worms by turning over the stones, he had set himself to angle for eels in a sullen-looking pool. His shoes and stockings were off, and the bulging out of his coat pockets told where they were. He stood up to his ankles in the water, in a very insecure position, on the slippery, sloping rock; and, upon Herbert thoughtlessly giving a shout to startle him, his feet flew from under him, and he sat down in the water and commenced



sliding down to the deep pool, till he was stopped and unceremoniously dragged back by his coat collar—first himself, then his rod and line, then a small, active eel, which gave him a great deal of trouble to unhook and secure.

It was long past our dinner hour, we had some distance to drive, the coachman was plunging down through the woods in search of us, and we were reluctantly compelled to leave the river and the cool shade.

"Well," said Viator, "I don't care for fishing at all, but such a day as this goes far to make one a fisherman. It has been a perfect day—it is more than a pleasure to live, it is an ecstasy—barring wet coat-tail pockets—on such a day,"—and more to the same effect, to which we listened indulgently.

IX.—The Happy Valley.

It was somewhat singular that just as we sat down to write this chapter, which concerns the pleasant Vale of Llangollen, the post should bring us a letter from an "old chum"—one who spent his boyhood in that valley, and who is now settled far from us, writing to us but seldom. In his letter he says:—

"I was at Llangollen again yesterday, and was much reminded of our old haunts and walks. The



Eglwyseg rocks seemed to hover like a cloud, 'so near and yet so far;' near, because I could see not only the bold escarpment, but also 'by faith' the minute stones and bywalks and ledges in the crags; far, because time always forbids my going up there. The air of those old rocks, and the associations of the river Dee, have had a great effect on my mental constitution."

Four years of our boyhood were spent in the happy valley; and in company with the writer of the letter, we had explored every nook and cranny of the hills and glens, and fished every yard of river and canal within the circle of mountains that hem in the vale. We made friends with the hill farmers, and were heartily welcomed by them when our rambles led us to their homesteads.

And thus it was that we won the heart to love and remember the beautiful valley. Our rambles were such pleasant ones, we caught such store of fish, obtained so many birds' eggs, climbed so often above the clouds, dived into the deep pools of the river, saw so many rare and lovely things in nature, gained so much pleasant information, and enjoyed such boisterous health during that time, that we christened it the Happy Valley. To us it was no misnomer, for it was a happy valley to us, and through the rose-coloured spectacles of our youth it seemed a happy place to those that dwelt there. It was little matter to us whether we breathed the delicious enjoyment and life of a bright June day,

or trudged over the moorland in face of a snow-storm; our rude health and careless minds relished each alike.

Like the meres, the Vale of Llangollen was a place that the Gipsy *must* see; and so, one sunny day, a party of us drove in a waggonette, passing on our way the massive structure of Chirk Castle, and driving through avenues of mighty trees, which cast their shadows upon a forest of bracken, where the deer stood and gazed at us.

Following the Dee upwards, we entered the narrow gorge which gives entrance to the vale, and has scarce room for the river, the railway, canal, and a couple of roads to squeeze through. On either side the hills rose steep and thickly wooded, and some distance below us the river ran between rocky, tree-covered banks. Before us the village lay, picturesque and irregular. To the left was the long, steep range of the Berwyns, with the bold Geraint, or Barber's Hill, jutting out; to the right was the sugarloaf of the "Castle Dinas Bran" hill, and beyond that the white limestone terraces and the purple moorland of the Eglwyseg rocks; and far in front were the mountains and glens that were the fairyland of our boyhood.

We had a long summer's day before us, and we determined, after taking the ladies to the top of Dinas Bran, otherwise Crow Castle, to leave them to their own devices, and visit as many of our old fishing haunts as possible. Passing over the old

stone bridge, with its angular buttresses, whence we used to "dip" for the large trout that lived in the deep, black pool below, known as Llyn Dhu, we hired a couple of donkeys, and mounting the two ladies thereon, we breasted the hill. A strong wind blew, and when it caught us sideways it seemed as if donkeys and all must be blown over, so that we men had to lend our aid to prop up the animals; and, speaking for ourselves, we can say that at certain critical moments, when we were rounding exposed corners, the Gipsy's grip upon our coat collar would not have disgraced a Cornish wrestler. The summit gained, we sought a sheltered corner under the lee of the ruins, whence we could gaze on the valley of the Dee, spanned in the distance by the aerial flight of the aqueduct. Meadow, wood, and stream in their most beautiful aspect met our view, but our gaze lingered more on the rocks to the left. On the opposite side of a valley, three-quarters of a mile broad, rose the stupendous terraced cliffs of the Eglwyseg rocks, rising in snow-white steps, severed by green moss and greener fern, reminding us of the old time when we used to find the nests of the rock-dove and the kestrel in the clefts of the crags, or in the dark yew bushes that clung to the face of the cliff. The ring-ouzel and the stonechat were also common there, and we frequently found their nests. Then if we wandered away over the wild moorland that stretches in one unbroken mass of purple heather from the summit

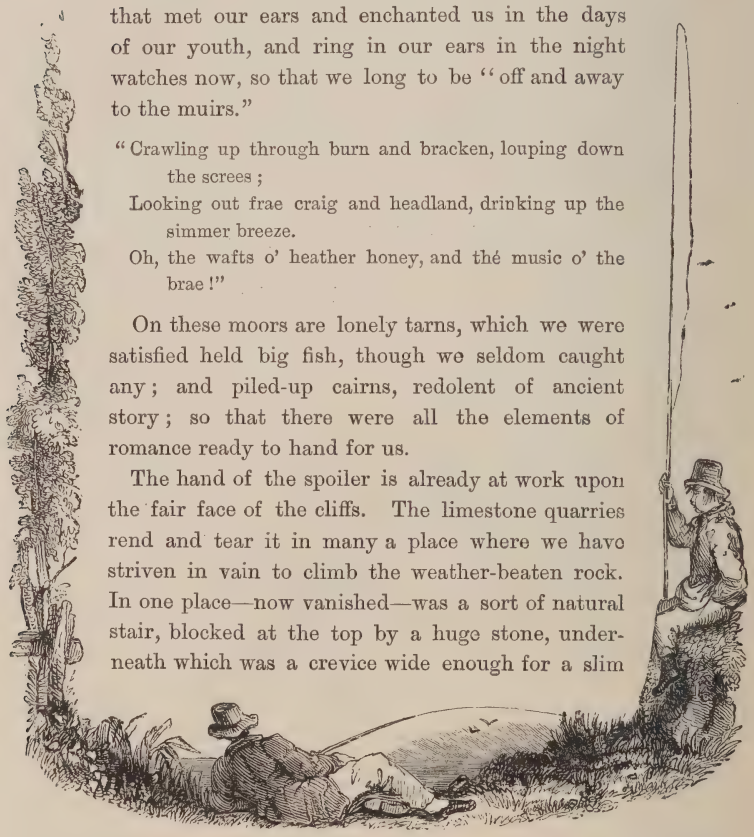
of the highest cliff, we would find the broken shells of eggs dropped by pigeon or crow in their flight, or laid on the ground; and in the marshy spots the nests of the lapwing and curlew.

The whirring of grouse, the laugh of the kestrel, the croak of the raven which we startled from the carcase of a dead sheep, the cry of the curlew, and the plaint of the lapwing—these were the sounds that met our ears and enchanted us in the days of our youth, and ring in our ears in the night watches now, so that we long to be "off and away to the muirs."

"Crawling up through burn and bracken, louping down the screes;
Looking out frae craig and headland, drinking up the simmer breeze.
Oh, the wafts o' heather honey, and thé music o' the brae!"

On these moors are lonely tarns, which we were satisfied held big fish, though we seldom caught any; and piled-up cairns, redolent of ancient story; so that there were all the elements of romance ready to hand for us.

The hand of the spoiler is already at work upon the fair face of the cliffs. The limestone quarries rend and tear it in many a place where we have striven in vain to climb the weather-beaten rock. In one place—now vanished—was a sort of natural stair, blocked at the top by a huge stone, underneath which was a crevice wide enough for a slim



lad to crawl through. This place we named "Mouse-hole," and on the top we erected a hut, in which, on holiday afternoons, we sat, like gods at ease, watching the puny world below.

Nor, when we crossed over to the other side of the ruins, and, facing the sturdy buffets of the wind, looked over the assemblage of hills—green in the foreground, and broken with iron-grey slate quarries, and, in the distance, blue and uncertain in outline—was the scene less suggestive.



But a truce to these memories, which, though sweet to us, are of little interest to you. Behold us, therefore, on the banks of the narrow, clear canal, beginning, as we began in our pinafore times, to angle for gudgeon. There were plenty of caddis worms, or "corbets," as we called them formerly, creeping about at the bottom of the water, close to the margin; and, drawing one out of its case, we put the plump, white grub on our hook. The gudgeons were nosing about on the gravel in companies of a dozen or two; and as the bait floated by them, one darted aside at it with a silvery flash, and was twitched out. In a short time we had caught a dozen of all sizes, from that of a minnow to six inches in length. Having thus procured plenty of bait, we turned our fly-rod into something more like a spinning-rod, by substituting a stouter top joint, and then, rigging up some spinning tackle, mounted on gut, we baited with a gudgeon, and commenced to trail



the bait in the canal, walking slowly the while along the bank. In this way we had formerly taken many small jack, from two to four pounds in weight, and ere long we found that we could repeat the old performance. Cunningly guiding the glittering bait along a lane of water between two masses of weed, a jack darted out from under one of them, and hooked himself fast. He was three pounds in weight, and our fly-rod gave a decent amount of play ere he was grassed, or, to speak more correctly, gravelled. The next capture was a little larger, and came from beneath the stonework of a bridge, and further on still a smaller one was brought to book. It was a pretty sight to see the fish dart and rush in the air-clear water, and dive under the green weeds.

In this manner we walked along the canal until the scene grew very wild and picturesque. Close on the left the river foamed over its rocks and its salmon weirs; on the right the canal became narrower and deeper, and the rocks overhanging it on the other side were fringed with ferns, laced with brambles, and cushioned with moss. Beyond the canal a long slope of green mountain arose, thickly dotted with gracefully drooping birches. Down that glen flows a capital trout brook, and, if you were to follow it upwards, you would come to the splendid ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey, an in a pool in a garden hard by you would see some gigantic trout swimming about in pampered pride.



A little further in front, the canal issues out of the river, where a semicircular weir of great extent dams up the broad stream. It is worth while to cross the rickety old structure known as the chain-bridge, and to ascend to the Berwyn Station to see the view up the river, which, with its reaches of water seen between distant woods, should be drawn by Birket Foster.



Below the chain-bridge are two gorges, through which the whole river foams; although their names, the Cow's Leap and the Robber's Leap, indicate their narrowness. Below each of these is a whirling and eddying pool, where minnow-spinning has often proved deadly to the trout. We baited with the smallest of our gudgeons, and in the lower pool, notwithstanding the brightness of the day and the clearness of the water, we hooked and landed a trout of a pound and a quarter in weight, which is much above the average weight of trout in the Dee. Then we mounted our flies, and carefully picking our way over the uneven rocks, we fished the best of the streams and pools down to the "Llan," arriving at the town with a couple of dozen trout, all small —a bag which was by no means a contemptible one for the Dee, which in its open portions is considerably overfished.



After dinner we again started, while the others strolled in the garden of the "Royal," and threw pebbles at the rising trout in the still pool above

the weir. We hastened on until we came to a deep pool enshrouded with rocks and trees, and after sitting for half an hour over a pipe to let our dinner partly digest, we stripped and plunged in the deep pool off the old diving-rock, while the roach—of which fish there are too many in the quiet parts of the river—darted away from before us in all directions. An old feat was to scramble to the top of a rapid above the pool, and then to swim downwards in a rush of white water through a narrow gorge into the eddying pool. We did this once again, and thereupon wondered how it was that we did it so often and safely when we were boys. It struck us as being an exemplification of the old proverb that "fools rush in where wise men fear to tread."

There was but one thing more wanting to complete the old fishing round, and that was soon done. Wading through a shallow part of the river, and carrying our clothes across, we dressed, and clambering through a thicket reached the foot of the canal embankment, and were soon on its banks. Close by was a "basin" or wider space where the canal barges are turned. In this quiet, weedy spot the roach were swimming in hundreds, just the same as if years had not passed since we fished for them before. With a black gnat and a small "coch y bonddu," each tipped with a bit of kid glove, we were soon doing execution among the silver-scaled beauties. They were rising gently

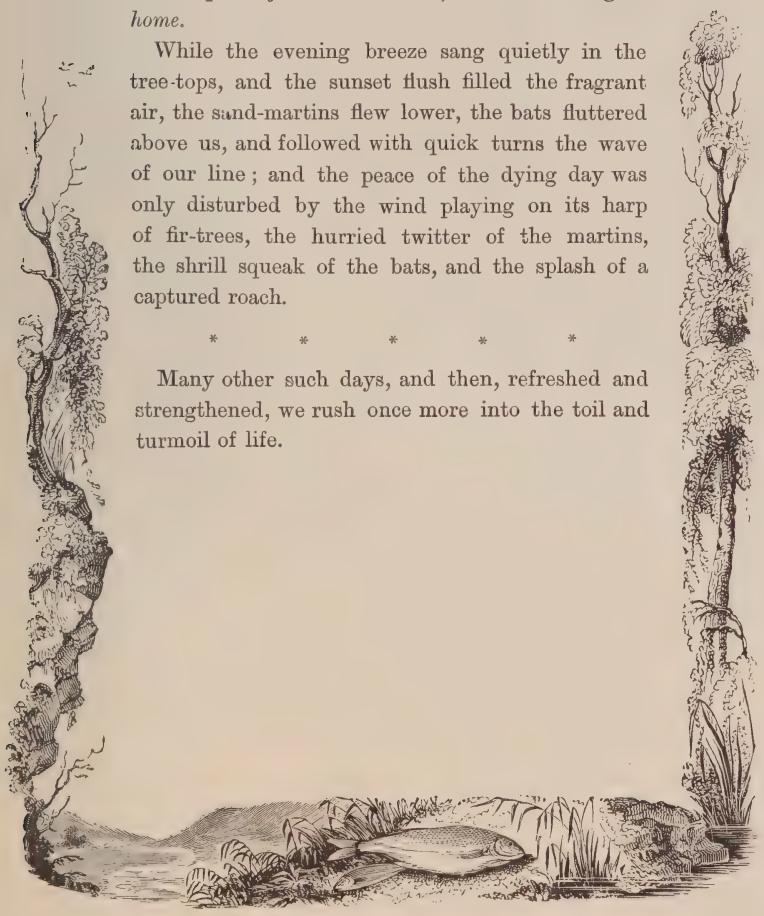


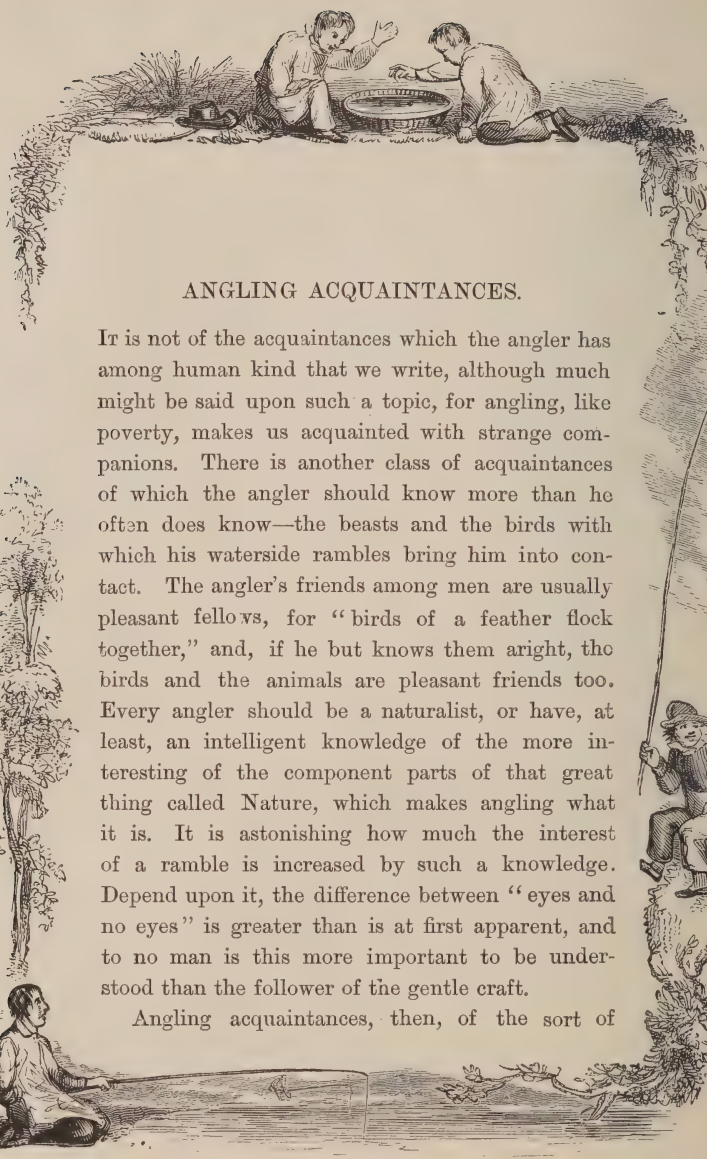
all over the still surface, and we threw our flies before the biggest of them, and watched them sail up to the bit of feather and open their mouths just with the intention of *tasting*—no more; but ah! a quick jerk of the wrist, and the steel goes *home*.

While the evening breeze sang quietly in the tree-tops, and the sunset flush filled the fragrant air, the sand-martins flew lower, the bats fluttered above us, and followed with quick turns the wave of our line; and the peace of the dying day was only disturbed by the wind playing on its harp of fir-trees, the hurried twitter of the martins, the shrill squeak of the bats, and the splash of a captured roach.

* * * * *

Many other such days, and then, refreshed and strengthened, we rush once more into the toil and turmoil of life.



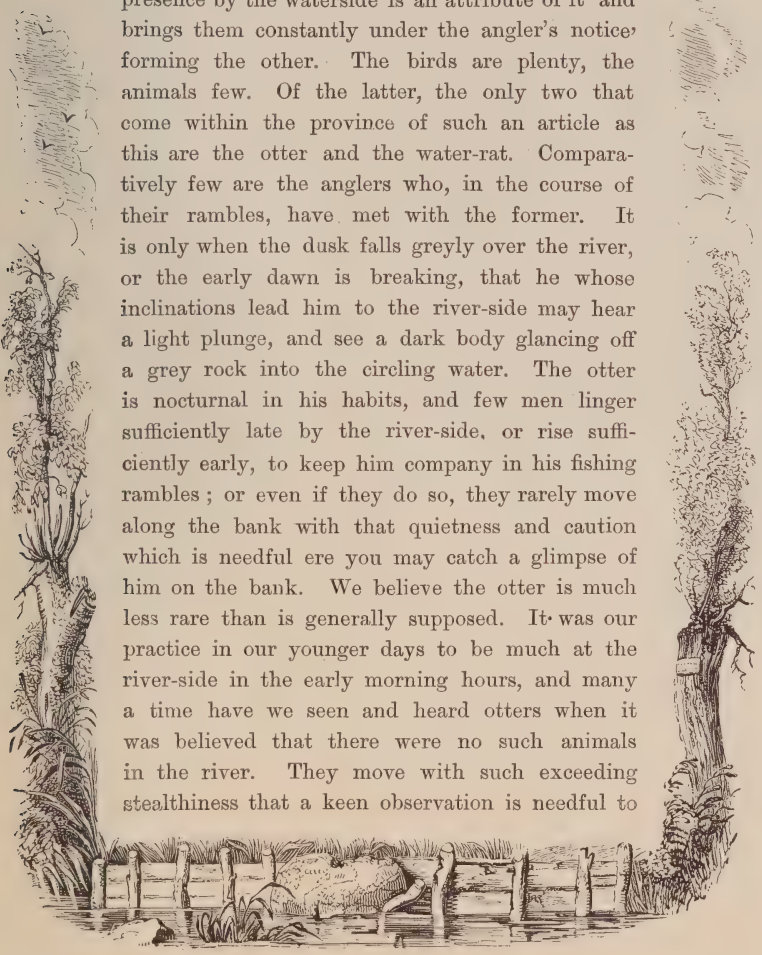


ANGLING ACQUAINTANCES.

It is not of the acquaintances which the angler has among human kind that we write, although much might be said upon such a topic, for angling, like poverty, makes us acquainted with strange companions. There is another class of acquaintances of which the angler should know more than he often does know—the beasts and the birds with which his waterside rambles bring him into contact. The angler's friends among men are usually pleasant fellows, for "birds of a feather flock together," and, if he but knows them aright, the birds and the animals are pleasant friends too. Every angler should be a naturalist, or have, at least, an intelligent knowledge of the more interesting of the component parts of that great thing called Nature, which makes angling what it is. It is astonishing how much the interest of a ramble is increased by such a knowledge. Depend upon it, the difference between "eyes and no eyes" is greater than is at first apparent, and to no man is this more important to be understood than the follower of the gentle craft.

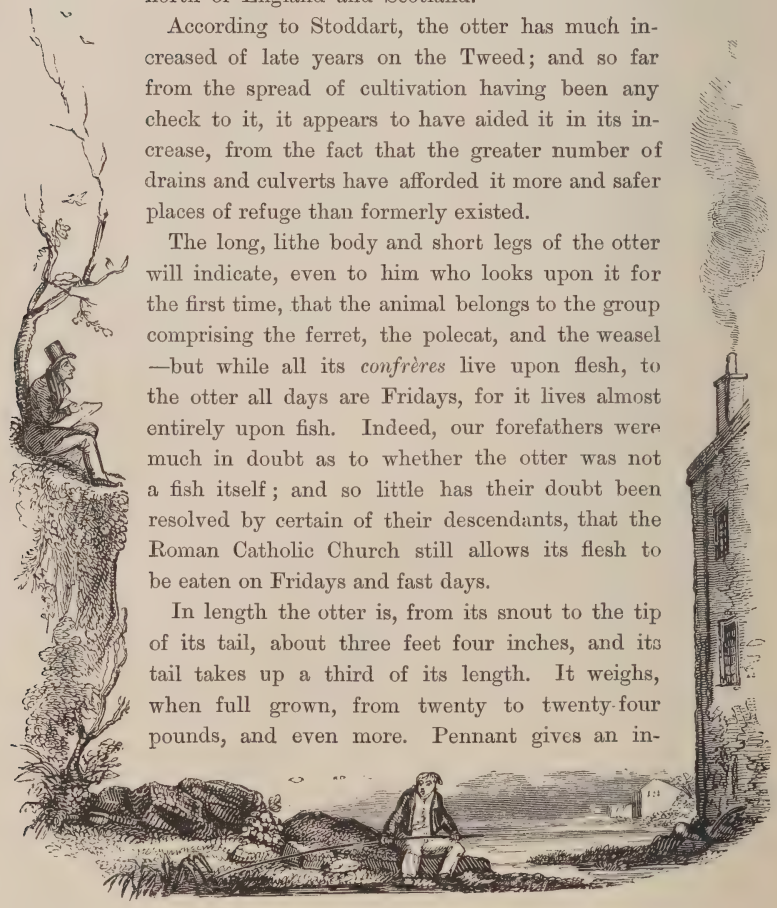
Angling acquaintances, then, of the sort of

which we write, may fairly be divided into two classes: those which live upon fish, and are anglers themselves, forming one; and those whose presence by the waterside is an attribute of it and brings them constantly under the angler's notice, forming the other. The birds are plenty, the animals few. Of the latter, the only two that come within the province of such an article as this are the otter and the water-rat. Comparatively few are the anglers who, in the course of their rambles, have met with the former. It is only when the dusk falls greyly over the river, or the early dawn is breaking, that he whose inclinations lead him to the river-side may hear a light plunge, and see a dark body glancing off a grey rock into the circling water. The otter is nocturnal in his habits, and few men linger sufficiently late by the river-side, or rise sufficiently early, to keep him company in his fishing rambles; or even if they do so, they rarely move along the bank with that quietness and caution which is needful ere you may catch a glimpse of him on the bank. We believe the otter is much less rare than is generally supposed. It was our practice in our younger days to be much at the river-side in the early morning hours, and many a time have we seen and heard otters when it was believed that there were no such animals in the river. They move with such exceeding stealthiness that a keen observation is needful to



detect them, and it is well known that country folk have but little keenness of observation where country sights and sounds are concerned. On many of the Welsh rivers they are tolerably plentiful, and also in the wilder streams of the north of England and Scotland.

According to Stoddart, the otter has much increased of late years on the Tweed; and so far from the spread of cultivation having been any check to it, it appears to have aided it in its increase, from the fact that the greater number of drains and culverts have afforded it more and safer places of refuge than formerly existed.



The long, lithe body and short legs of the otter will indicate, even to him who looks upon it for the first time, that the animal belongs to the group comprising the ferret, the polecat, and the weasel —but while all its *confrères* live upon flesh, to the otter all days are Fridays, for it lives almost entirely upon fish. Indeed, our forefathers were much in doubt as to whether the otter was not a fish itself; and so little has their doubt been resolved by certain of their descendants, that the Roman Catholic Church still allows its flesh to be eaten on Fridays and fast days.

In length the otter is, from its snout to the tip of its tail, about three feet four inches, and its tail takes up a third of its length. It weighs, when full grown, from twenty to twenty-four pounds, and even more. Pennant gives an in-

stance of one which weighed forty pounds. As befits an animal which lives so constantly under water, it is peculiarly constructed. Its head is broad and flat, and it has a broad muzzle, with a thick, overhanging upper lip. Its body is long and low, and much flattened horizontally. Its tail is flat and broad, and acts like a rudder; and its limbs are loosely jointed, so that the otter can quickly turn in any direction while it swims; and its broad feet are webbed. In general colour the otter is of a rich brown, but its body is covered with two distinct and very different coats of fur, "the shorter being extremely fine and soft, of a lightish grey colour, and brown at the tips; the longer are stiffer and thicker, very shining, greyish at the base, bright rich brown at the points, especially at the upper parts, and the outer surface of the legs."

So much for the outer appearance of our shy and retiring friend. During the night he wanders boldly about the streams and rivers, "seeking his prey from God;" in the daytime he is "at home" in a deep burrow in the river's bank, in the interstices of a crag, or mid the tangled roots of a tree, whence it would be hard for spade to oust him. The mouth of the burrow is as near as may be to the usual level of the river, but we do not think it is actually below water, as some authorities assert. In this snug abode, on a couch of leaves, he sleeps comfortably until the sun goes down, and



here the female brings forth her litter of four or five when the land brightens with spring.

And now let us look at a summer's night and day from the otter's point of view.

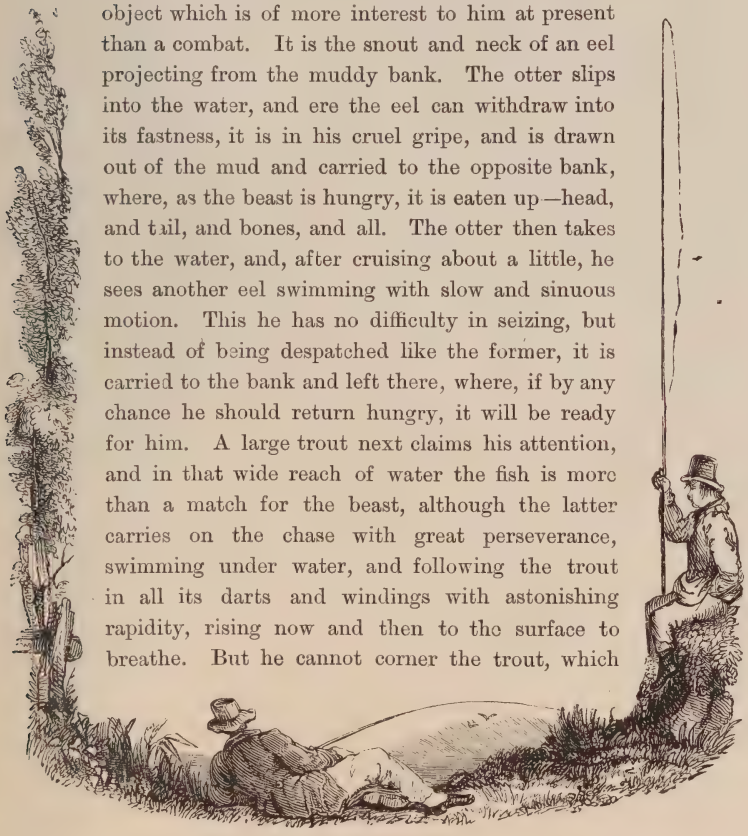
It is a deep, slow reach of river, running between close-wooded banks, where the oak and ash are seamed by the silvery birches, which look ghost-like in the coming twilight. The fire of sunset has departed, leaving but a sullen red in the clouds, which hang low in the west. The gloaming steals darkly over the river, and faint wreaths of mist rise from the quiet bays. The brown owl flits between the stems of the oaks, the water-hens come nodding from the thickly-herbaged banks, the trout rise with noisy splashes, and the circles sail down the smooth stream and mingle with others.

"The day has ended,
The night has descended."

How does the otter in his deep hole—where day and night it must be pitch-dark—tell when the day changes into night? Yet, as the daylight fades, he starts from his heavy sleep, and showing his teeth as he yawns—and a capital set of teeth they are—he uncoils himself from his bed of dried leaves, and sets out on his evening stroll. As he creeps through the marginal bushes, he comes suddenly upon a water-hen, at which he makes a playful snap, tearing out some of her wing feathers. He leaps down upon a mud-bank, and finds himself



face to face with a heron, standing solemnly upon one leg, intently watching a shallow. The two rival anglers watch each other with dubious looks. The otter snarls at the bird, and the latter gives a startled leap and a half-peck at the intruder. The otter is inclined for hostilities, but he is afraid of the sharp and threatening beak of the bird. Just then, however, he catches sight of an object which is of more interest to him at present than a combat. It is the snout and neck of an eel projecting from the muddy bank. The otter slips into the water, and ere the eel can withdraw into its fastness, it is in his cruel gripe, and is drawn out of the mud and carried to the opposite bank, where, as the beast is hungry, it is eaten up—head, and tail, and bones, and all. The otter then takes to the water, and, after cruising about a little, he sees another eel swimming with slow and sinuous motion. This he has no difficulty in seizing, but instead of being despatched like the former, it is carried to the bank and left there, where, if by any chance he should return hungry, it will be ready for him. A large trout next claims his attention, and in that wide reach of water the fish is more than a match for the beast, although the latter carries on the chase with great perseverance, swimming under water, and following the trout in all its darts and windings with astonishing rapidity, rising now and then to the surface to breathe. But he cannot corner the trout, which



is a cunning old stager, and will not poke its head into a hole. The otter gives it up at last, and seeing an unwary chub rising at a moth, he seizes it, and carries it to a rock, where, after taking a bite from its shoulder, he leaves it as he left the eel. The otter longs for trout, and trout he will have, and he knows where to get them.

A good-sized burn runs into the river from out a craggy, wild, and wooded dene, where it leaps over a score of waterfalls, and eddies into a hundred pools. Up this the otter takes his way, pushing through bramble and brier, and splashing over stream and shallow in a very businesslike way. He comes to where the burn, fast sweeping over a slanting rock, spreads out into a clear, deep pool. The otter gazes into the pool with eyes that in the dark glare luminously, and sees a large trout poising itself midway in the clear water. With an almost noiseless plunge the beast dives into the pool, and, quick as thought, the fish pops under a stone. The otter kicks the stone away with his paw, snaps up poor trouty, and in a few minutes has eaten a considerable portion of it. So up the brook he goes—"the dainty old thief of an otter"—capturing a fish here and there, eating some, and leaving others with barely a bite taken out of the shoulder. The moon rises large and red over the hill, and sends bright sheets of light between the oak trees. The robber growls at the bright-faced moon, for



she sends strange shadows upon the earth, which make him tremble with fright.

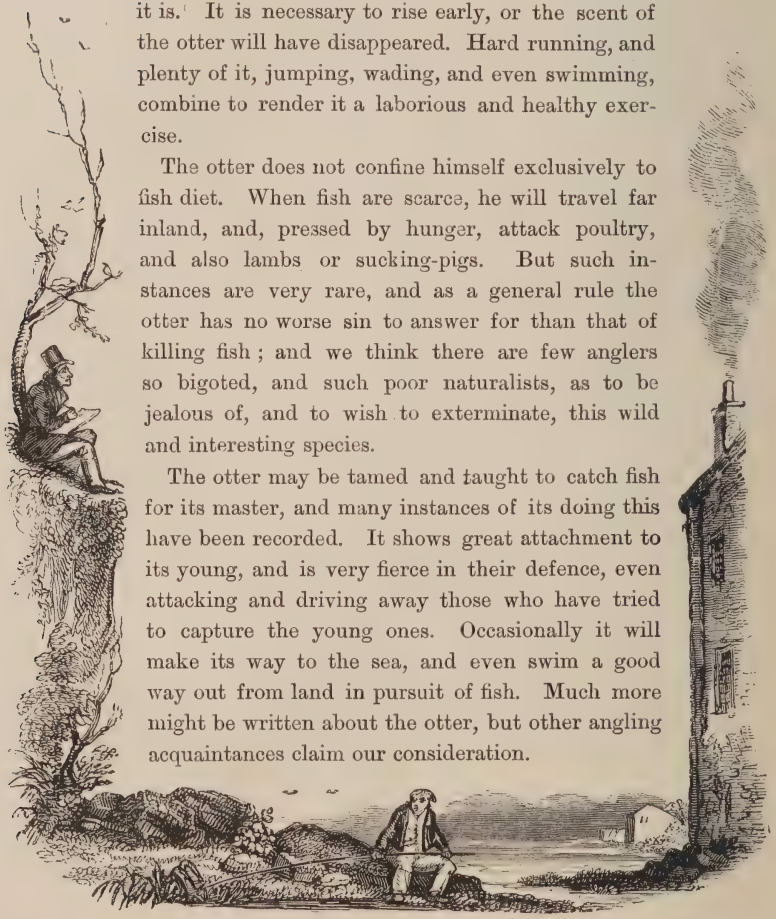
He at last begins to retrace his steps towards the river, for it is close upon dawn, and daylight must see him in his "hover," as otter-hunters call his burrow. Hark! what is that noise that is borne upon the chill morning breeze? He stops, and listens intently. It is repeated. He knows it too well. It is the twang of a horn, and close upon it is the belling of a hound. The otter-hunters are afoot, and, as he still listens, the loud chorus of hound-cries rings through the wood. He knows that they have found his scent or "drag," and have cut off his retreat from the river. There is no place in the pool where he can conceal himself, so he turns tail and bounds through the wood, following the stream upwards, fear lending speed to his feet, until he reaches the open fields. Crossing these at a gallop, he strikes the head of another burn, and tearing down this he regains the river. Even as he does so he is overtaken, and surrounded by his pursuers in the shallow stream. An eager sportsman dashes up to his waist in the water, and seizes the otter by his tail in the approved method, but he is not quick enough. Ere he can swing the poor hunted beast clear of the water, the latter has turned round and made his teeth meet in the arm of his would-be captor, who lets him go. The otter slips past the hounds and regains the deep water, and shortly

afterwards his home, where he gathers himself up panting and weary, and whence the united efforts of his enemies fail to dislodge him.

Otter-hunting is a sport which still flourishes in the west and north of England, and very fine sport it is. It is necessary to rise early, or the scent of the otter will have disappeared. Hard running, and plenty of it, jumping, wading, and even swimming, combine to render it a laborious and healthy exercise.

The otter does not confine himself exclusively to fish diet. When fish are scarce, he will travel far inland, and, pressed by hunger, attack poultry, and also lambs or sucking-pigs. But such instances are very rare, and as a general rule the otter has no worse sin to answer for than that of killing fish; and we think there are few anglers so bigoted, and such poor naturalists, as to be jealous of, and to wish to exterminate, this wild and interesting species.

The otter may be tamed and taught to catch fish for its master, and many instances of its doing this have been recorded. It shows great attachment to its young, and is very fierce in their defence, even attacking and driving away those who have tried to capture the young ones. Occasionally it will make its way to the sea, and even swim a good way out from land in pursuit of fish. Much more might be written about the otter, but other angling acquaintances claim our consideration.



Next in order on our list, but with a very wide gap between it and the otter, comes the water-rat or water-vole ; and as it is such a small animal, we will add to its importance by giving it its proper Latin name of *Arvicola amphibius*. It is a little creature, much prettier than the common rat ; and with its brown soft fur, and round snout, and black beady eyes, it is not by any means an ugly object. While walking by the water-side, one hears a splash, and sees a train of bubbles dimpling the surface, and one knows that it is either a water-hen or a water-rat. If it be the latter, it will come to the surface in about a minute to breathe. Every rambler by the water-side knows the difference there is in the appearance of the water-vole and the common rat, and he ought also to know the great and important difference there is in their habits. The common rat lives upon fish, flesh, or fowl, when it can get them. The water-rat lives entirely upon roots or sub-aquatic plants. They often bear upon their shoulders the sins of their more rapacious brethren, but there is no reason why they should be destroyed, save in those places where their habit of burrowing in the banks might be productive of damage.

In the "Journal of a Naturalist" there is an interesting anecdote of this little animal. The writer says : "A large stagnant piece of water in an inland county, with which I was intimately acquainted, and which I very frequently visited



for many years of my life, was one summer suddenly infested with an astonishing number of the short-tailed water-rats, none of which had previously existed there. Its vegetation was the common production of such places, excepting that the larger portion of it was densely covered with its usual crop, the small horsetail (*equisetum limosum*). This constituted the food of the creatures, and the noise made by their champing it we could distinctly hear in the evening at many yards' distance. They were shot by dozens daily, but the survivors seemed quite regardless of the noise, the smoke, the deaths around them. Before the winter this great herd disappeared, and so entirely evacuated the place that a few years after I could not obtain a single specimen."

When capes and bays of rivers are shady in the gloaming, how often have we seen the heron slowly winging its way down-stream, turning its head and long neck this way and that, looking for a likely spot to settle, its large, grey shape dimly reflected in the misty water. A bird of weird and ghost-like aspect is the heron, but one which is a favourite with the angler; for whether he comes suddenly upon it by some lonely tarn-side, standing knee-deep in the shallows, with its neck drawn back, and head resting on its breast, or watches its slow and laboured flight as it awkwardly takes wing from the river-bank as he suddenly approaches, it is an interesting and beautiful object. It awakens



memories of olden times when the heron was the favourite quarry of the hawker. What an exciting thing it must have been, to have seen the noble falcon swoop upon the huge-winged heron, and to see the bird turn over on its back, and with long, sharp beak and talons fight savagely to the last.

When the heron is on the wing its flight is apparently slow. When you come upon it suddenly, it has a very awkward and ugly way of taking wing, stretching out its neck and hunching up its back in an ungainly fashion. When it is fully on the wing, its neck is stretched out before and its legs behind; and when it alights, it brings its legs forward with a peculiar "hoist." Although its flight seems slow, the beats of its wings are far quicker than one would imagine, inasmuch as they average 120 a minute. How quick, then, must be the vibrations of the wings of smaller birds!

The food of the heron is principally fish, and to catch these it stands in some shallow portion of the river or lake, where the water is tolerably quiet, and thus it watches until its prey passes within reach, when out darts its long neck, and the passing trout or eel is caught between the long sharp mandibles. If it be an eel, the heron has often some difficulty in killing it, but it takes particular care to do it effectually by nipping it in the back, for a live eel wriggling about in its inside would be far from pleasant. In default of fish diet, the heron will eat the young of water-fowl, mice, frogs,

etc. It has been known to seize a wounded snipe which had fallen near it, and to swim out for several yards to seize the newly-hatched young from the water-hens' nests.

Although, as a general rule, the heron is a solitary feeder, it has gregarious breeding habits, nesting together in large companies like rooks. There are several heronries in England, but they are scattered far and wide; and the heron flies long distances night and morning in quest of food. It builds on the extreme tops of the tallest trees, and as near the end of the branch as possible, for the size of the bird makes it inconvenient for it to penetrate far amid the branches of the tree. It lays its eggs, which are of a light bluish-green colour, early in the spring. It is said that if it accidentally drops the food it is carrying to its young to the ground, it does not take the trouble to pick it up again, but flies off for more. This may arise from the difficulty it has in rising from the ground in a confined space.

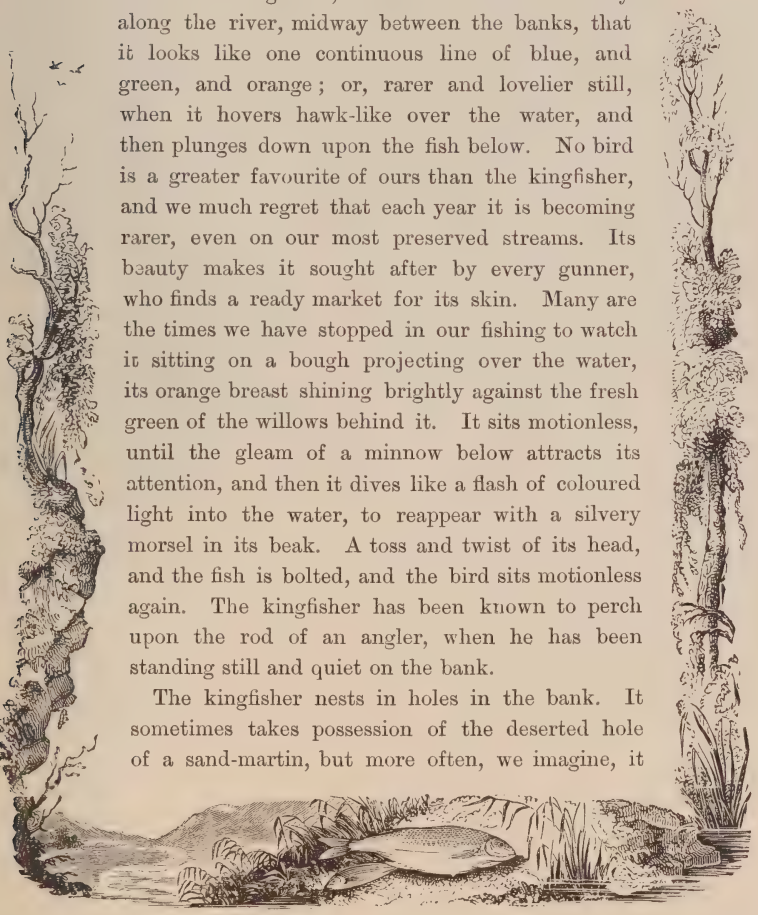
Some years ago there appeared in one of the illustrated papers a birdseye view of a heronry from *above*. The enterprising artist had climbed to the summit of a tall tree overlooking the heronry, and from thence made his sketch. It was a very novel and interesting sight. The herons were flying about in dire alarm, or swaying uncomfortably on the pliant branches. Many of the nests which were not tenanted by the herons

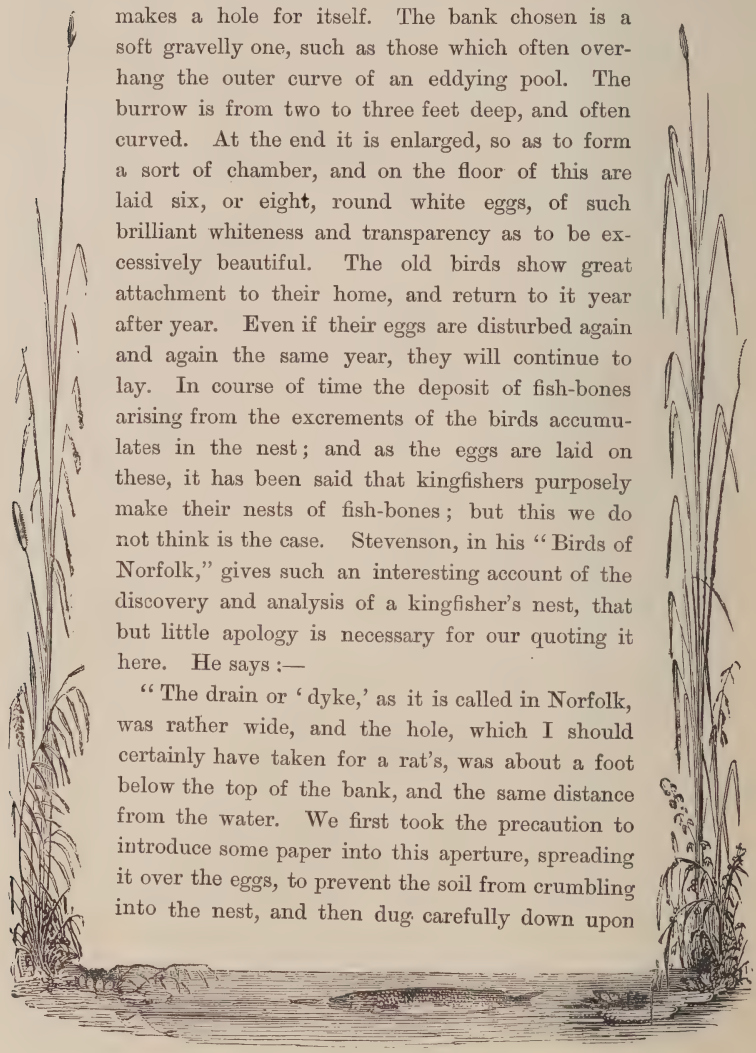


were occupied by squirrels, and by hawks, jackdaws, and other birds.

But we think the prettiest object of all those which greet the eye of the angler by the river-side is the kingfisher, whether it skims so swiftly along the river, midway between the banks, that it looks like one continuous line of blue, and green, and orange; or, rarer and lovelier still, when it hovers hawk-like over the water, and then plunges down upon the fish below. No bird is a greater favourite of ours than the kingfisher, and we much regret that each year it is becoming rarer, even on our most preserved streams. Its beauty makes it sought after by every gunner, who finds a ready market for its skin. Many are the times we have stopped in our fishing to watch it sitting on a bough projecting over the water, its orange breast shining brightly against the fresh green of the willows behind it. It sits motionless, until the gleam of a minnow below attracts its attention, and then it dives like a flash of coloured light into the water, to reappear with a silvery morsel in its beak. A toss and twist of its head, and the fish is bolted, and the bird sits motionless again. The kingfisher has been known to perch upon the rod of an angler, when he has been standing still and quiet on the bank.

The kingfisher nests in holes in the bank. It sometimes takes possession of the deserted hole of a sand-martin, but more often, we imagine, it

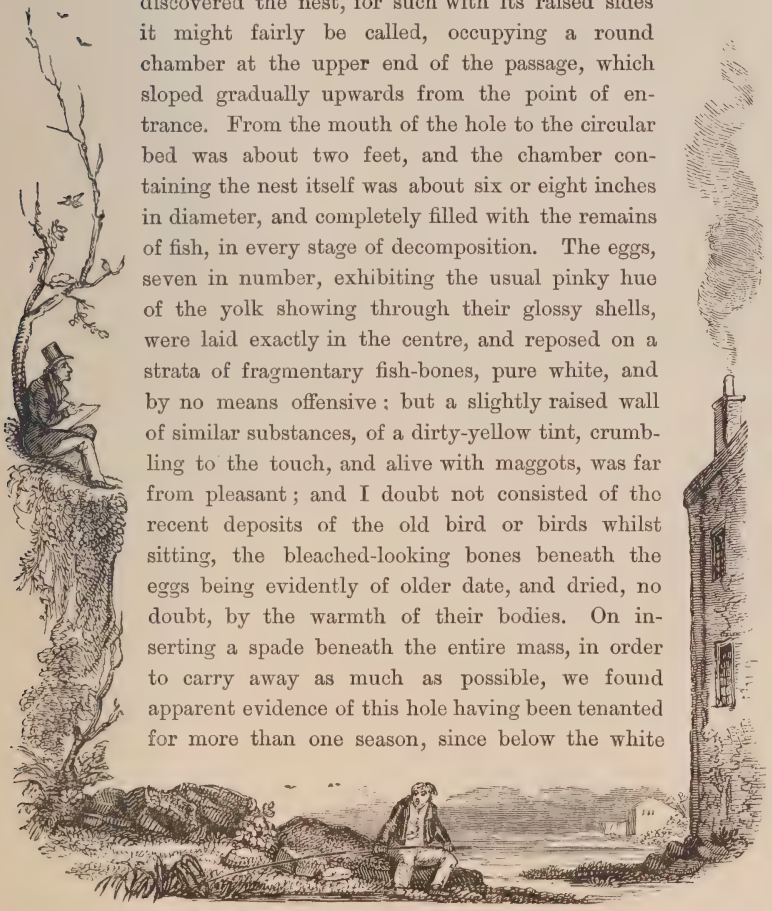




makes a hole for itself. The bank chosen is a soft gravelly one, such as those which often overhang the outer curve of an eddying pool. The burrow is from two to three feet deep, and often curved. At the end it is enlarged, so as to form a sort of chamber, and on the floor of this are laid six, or eight, round white eggs, of such brilliant whiteness and transparency as to be excessively beautiful. The old birds show great attachment to their home, and return to it year after year. Even if their eggs are disturbed again and again the same year, they will continue to lay. In course of time the deposit of fish-bones arising from the excrements of the birds accumulates in the nest; and as the eggs are laid on these, it has been said that kingfishers purposely make their nests of fish-bones; but this we do not think is the case. Stevenson, in his "Birds of Norfolk," gives such an interesting account of the discovery and analysis of a kingfisher's nest, that but little apology is necessary for our quoting it here. He says:—

"The drain or 'dyke,' as it is called in Norfolk, was rather wide, and the hole, which I should certainly have taken for a rat's, was about a foot below the top of the bank, and the same distance from the water. We first took the precaution to introduce some paper into this aperture, spreading it over the eggs, to prevent the soil from crumbling into the nest, and then dug carefully down upon

the paper, extracting a large circular piece of turf; but, in spite of all our precautions, the earth, owing to a long-continued drought, was too friable to be kept from partially falling in. Carefully brushing this away and removing the paper, we discovered the nest, for such with its raised sides it might fairly be called, occupying a round chamber at the upper end of the passage, which sloped gradually upwards from the point of entrance. From the mouth of the hole to the circular bed was about two feet, and the chamber containing the nest itself was about six or eight inches in diameter, and completely filled with the remains of fish, in every stage of decomposition. The eggs, seven in number, exhibiting the usual pinky hue of the yolk showing through their glossy shells, were laid exactly in the centre, and reposed on a strata of fragmentary fish-bones, pure white, and by no means offensive; but a slightly raised wall of similar substances, of a dirty-yellow tint, crumbling to the touch, and alive with maggots, was far from pleasant; and I doubt not consisted of the recent deposits of the old bird or birds whilst sitting, the bleached-looking bones beneath the eggs being evidently of older date, and dried, no doubt, by the warmth of their bodies. On inserting a spade beneath the entire mass, in order to carry away as much as possible, we found apparent evidence of this hole having been tenanted for more than one season, since below the white



bones forming the actual nest was at least an inch in depth of former *dejecta*. This under layer was also very dark in colour, and very *lively*, whilst that portion nearest the walls of the chamber was quite dry, and caked into the surrounding soil. Amongst the half-digested portions of bone, I particularly noticed the remains of beetle-cases, and one large fragment of a water-beetle (*notonecta*), with the claws complete; but all these substances were confined exclusively to the nesting-chamber, and were not scattered about the passage leading thereto, nor was there a single atom of grass, straw, or such-like material to be seen anywhere. Wishing to preserve, not only the eggs, but the strange bed on which they were placed, the whole mass, on our reaching home, was turned into a muslin bag, and by placing that in a colander, and allowing water to run freely through it for some time, all the earthy particles were soon disposed of; and the maggots were as effectively destroyed by a single immersion in boiling water. The bones, thus thoroughly cleansed and sifted, were next turned out upon a sheet of blotting-paper, and then laid on a wire sieve to strain and dry, till in a few hours the entire heap looked as white and free from all impurities as the portion on which the eggs had been first seen. On weighing these bones, thus freed from all foreign particles, I found they amounted to exactly 1,080 grains, or two ounces and a quarter and thirty grains."

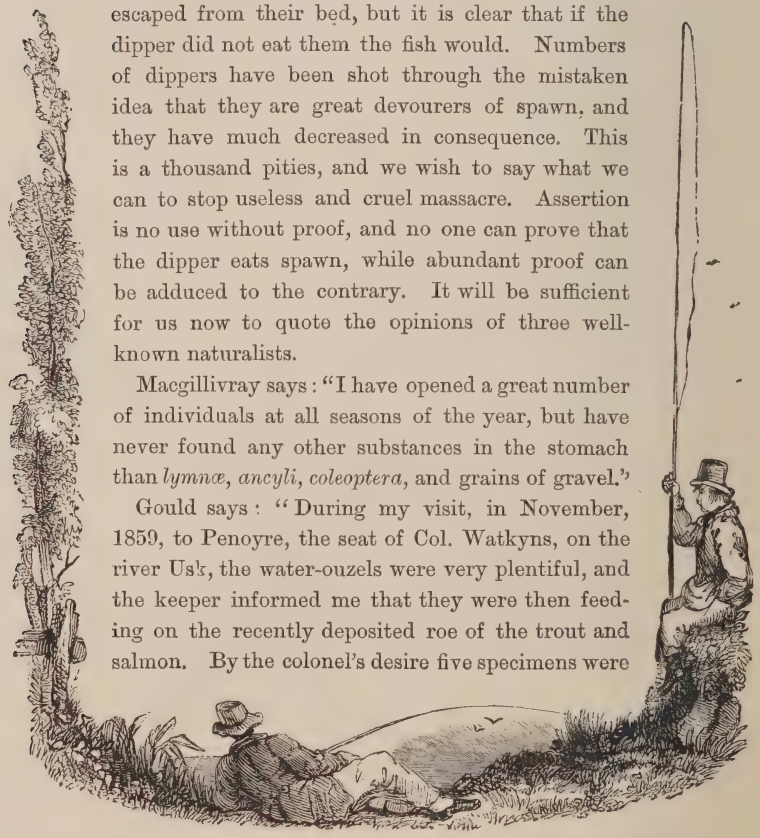


During a severe frost the kingfisher has been known to be frozen by the claws to his perch, by the water dripping from it after a dive, and to die. What a sad end for the beautiful bird!

Next to the kingfisher, the greatest ornament to our streams is the dipper. On some boulder that stems the eddying current it rests, its white breast facing you, and its tail jerking like the robin's. It dives into the water, and reappears a yard or two off; then flies to another stone, repeating the process; and then, as you approach, it flies onward with a straight flight like that of the kingfisher. In a short time you again come up with it, and you may so keep the same bird before you for a couple of miles. The dipper is a lonely bird, frequenting sequestered and secluded spots, and more than two are seldom seen together.

It nests very early in the year, and builds a large, fine nest, after the pattern of the wren's, domed, and with a small hole as entrance. It is placed in a crevice of a rock, between the roots of trees that overhang the river, and oftentimes in a hole in a wheel, or rock, in the very splash of the waterfall. The eggs are five in number, pure white, very pointed, and somewhat less in size than those of a thrush. Like the kingfisher, the dipper reappears year after year at the same nest; and when one pair dies, another will take up the old quarters. The dipper has a faint, sweet, piping song, which ounds like the echo of a rivulet's music.

There are two vexed questions concerning the dipper, which have caused a great amount of controversy. One is, What does the dipper eat? and the other is, Can it walk under water? With regard to the former, our observation has convinced us that the dipper lives almost exclusively upon insects. Now and then, it is possible he may gobble up a few grains of spawn which have escaped from their bed, but it is clear that if the dipper did not eat them the fish would. Numbers of dippers have been shot through the mistaken idea that they are great devourers of spawn, and they have much decreased in consequence. This is a thousand pities, and we wish to say what we can to stop useless and cruel massacre. Assertion is no use without proof, and no one can prove that the dipper eats spawn, while abundant proof can be adduced to the contrary. It will be sufficient for us now to quote the opinions of three well-known naturalists.



Macgillivray says: "I have opened a great number of individuals at all seasons of the year, but have never found any other substances in the stomach than *lymnæ*, *ancyli*, *coleoptera*, and grains of gravel."

Gould says: "During my visit, in November, 1859, to Penoyre, the seat of Col. Watkyns, on the river Usk, the water-ouzels were very plentiful, and the keeper informed me that they were then feeding on the recently deposited roe of the trout and salmon. By the colonel's desire five specimens were

shot for the purpose of ascertaining by dissection the truth of this assertion, but I found no trace whatever of spawn in either of them. Their hard gizzards were entirely filled with larvæ of *phryganea* and the water-beetle (*hydrophilus*)."

Buckland says: "It may be observed that I do not mention the water-ouzel as destructive to spawn: this advisedly, as of late I have carefully examined the gizzards of several of these beautiful little birds, and have found only the remains of water insects in them; write the water-ouzel the *friend*, and not the enemy, of the fish spawn."

We think also that it is quite clear that dippers can walk under water. There is no evidence against it except the assertion of those who say it is impossible for a bird which is so much lighter than water to be able to walk under it. If they would examine the foot of a dipper, they would see that its claws are admirably formed to enable the bird to cling to the stones at the bottom of the stream; and it is, in fact, by their aid that the dipper manages to walk or scramble, not only under water, but up-stream as well. Our own observation of these birds has been keen, and we are convinced that the dipper can, and does, walk under water, and that for three or four yards, and it is some time picking up its insect-food from between the stones. We may be permitted, however, to support our assertion by the following quotation from a paper read some time ago by Dr. J. R. Kinahan,

before the Dublin Natural History Society, and which we read in "Science Gossip" for 1866 :—

"During the years 1849 and 1850, having nearly daily occasion to frequent that part of the river Dodder which passes through the romantic mountain glens of Glemismaul and Castlekelly, the great abundance of the water-ouzel, or, as the peasantry there call it, kingfisher, induced me to study its habits somewhat particularly.

"The general habits of the water-ouzel have been so well and so often described that they need not detain us ; but although it is now some years since M. Herbert announced the fact that this bird is possessed of the power of walking under water, on the bottom of streams, and although the truth of this observation has been strengthened by the evidence of such men as St. John, Dilwyn, Rennie, William Thompson, and Macgillivray, yet still there are found many—especially among the closet naturalists—who prefer to ignore the fact altogether, or else assert that this bird's habits in this respect are identical with those of other divers.

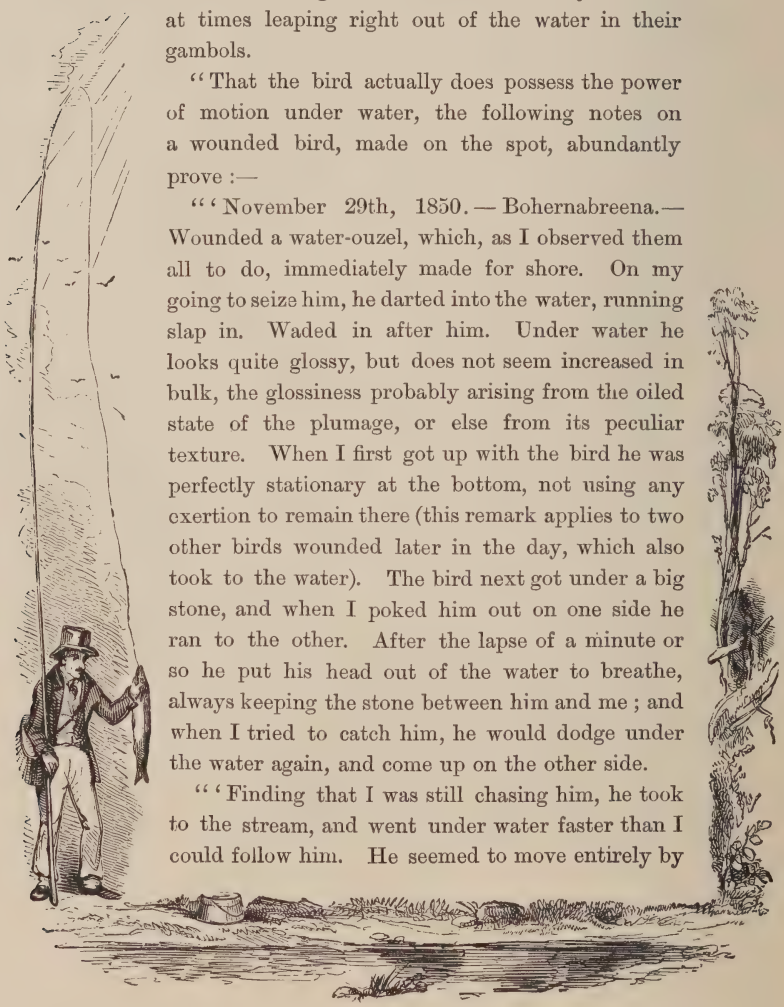
"My observations, made repeatedly during many months, and having for their object the elucidation of this very point, enable me to corroborate M. Herbert's account in every particular, except that the bird carries down a supply of air to the bottom, enclosed within its wings, in which he most certainly is in error, led away by a fancied analogy between the bird and diving-beetles ; as I have repeatedly

seen them rise to the surface to obtain air, which they do exactly like a grebe, merely raising the tip of the bill out of the water.

"The bird has several modes of diving: when seeking food, it generally goes down—like most divers—head-foremost, in an oblique direction, or else walks deliberately in from the shallow edge of the pool, the head bent down, and the knees (tarsal articulation) crouched. When seeking refuge, however, it sometimes sinks like a stone, exactly as the great northern diver, *C. glacialis*, has been observed to do; that is, gradually, the top of the head the last part submerged, without any apparent exertion; sometimes in the midst of its most rapid flight dropping down suddenly into the water like a plummet. Its course is indifferently with or across the stream, rarely against it.

"It often remains under water, totally submerged, for fifty seconds or upwards, and during that time will proceed from ten to twenty yards. When it comes out, the water may be seen running rapidly off its plumage. It swims with great rapidity, and appears to rejoice in the water as its true element; hardly ever alighting directly on a rock, but, even after its longest flight, splashing slap into the water at the base of a stone selected as a resting-place, and then scrambling to the summit of this. In its motion in the water it more closely resembles the jackass penguin of Cape Horn (*Apt. chrysocoma*) than any other aquatic bird I have had an





opportunity of studying. Like that bird—especially in the breeding season—the ouzels may be seen at times leaping right out of the water in their gambols.

"That the bird actually does possess the power of motion under water, the following notes on a wounded bird, made on the spot, abundantly prove :—

"'November 29th, 1850.—Bohernabreena.—Wounded a water-ouzel, which, as I observed them all to do, immediately made for shore. On my going to seize him, he darted into the water, running slap in. Waded in after him. Under water he looks quite glossy, but does not seem increased in bulk, the glossiness probably arising from the oiled state of the plumage, or else from its peculiar texture. When I first got up with the bird he was perfectly stationary at the bottom, not using any exertion to remain there (this remark applies to two other birds wounded later in the day, which also took to the water). The bird next got under a big stone, and when I poked him out on one side he ran to the other. After the lapse of a minute or so he put his head out of the water to breathe, always keeping the stone between him and me ; and when I tried to catch him, he would dodge under the water again, and come up on the other side.

"'Finding that I was still chasing him, he took to the stream, and went under water faster than I could follow him. He seemed to move entirely by

means of his feet, his wings hanging down behind his tail; though his motions were so quick, it was difficult to be positive as to the latter part of this observation. At times he swam in mid-water, using his wings, crossing the current several times, and seeming but little incommoded by it.

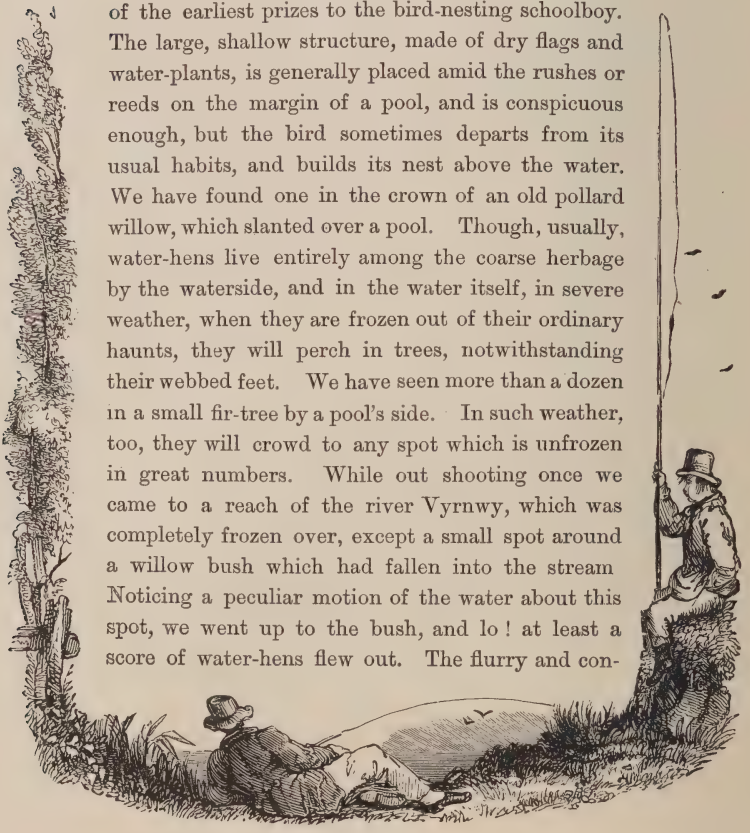
"'All at once he turned over on his back—still possessing the power of continuing under water; struggling to regain his original position, he spun round and round. It appeared as though the wounded wing had suddenly failed him, and thus prevented his preserving a due equilibrium in the water. At length he came to the top, when he immediately righted and swam as at other times. Every time I tried to lay hold of him he again ducked and dived down to the bottom, at first all right, and then the tumbling began again. When captured at length, I found him merely winged. I was enabled to confirm these observations several times that day, as I obtained seven specimens, five of which necessitated a watery chase before I succeeded in catching them, and one got clear off.'"

Such testimony should settle the matter at last. We hope it will be a very long time ere the dipper is banished from our trout streams, for without it a great part of their charm would be lost to us.

Every one knows the common water-hen. Where rivers slowly sweep between rushy banks, where the lake bends into quiet bays, and in the small rushy "pits" in fields, even close to houses, the



water-hen is to be seen making its way through the weeds, or swimming across the tiny bays, jerking its head and making as much fuss as if it were swimming twice as fast as it really is doing. It gives life and motion to many a lake that would otherwise be dull and drear, and its appearance in every small rushy pond adds great interest to the country ramble. The nest of the water-hen is one of the earliest prizes to the bird-nesting schoolboy. The large, shallow structure, made of dry flags and water-plants, is generally placed amid the rushes or reeds on the margin of a pool, and is conspicuous enough, but the bird sometimes departs from its usual habits, and builds its nest above the water. We have found one in the crown of an old pollard willow, which slanted over a pool. Though, usually, water-hens live entirely among the coarse herbage by the waterside, and in the water itself, in severe weather, when they are frozen out of their ordinary haunts, they will perch in trees, notwithstanding their webbed feet. We have seen more than a dozen in a small fir-tree by a pool's side. In such weather, too, they will crowd to any spot which is unfrozen in great numbers. While out shooting once we came to a reach of the river Vyrnwy, which was completely frozen over, except a small spot around a willow bush which had fallen into the stream Noticing a peculiar motion of the water about this spot, we went up to the bush, and lo! at least a score of water-hens flew out. The flurry and con-



fusion was so great that, although we firedboth barrels, we killed nothing.

When disturbed, the water-hen dives, or resorts to the shelter of the herbage; but when hard pressed, it takes to its wings with an ungainly flight, its legs hanging down and neck outstretched. When once fairly on the wing, they can fly for a considerable distance, and at night their notes may be heard in the summer-time, as they fly at a considerable height overhead. It is supposed that it is chiefly the males which have this nocturnal habit. The water-hen dives with great facility, and can remain under water for a length of time. It also seeks concealment by sinking in the water until only its beak is visible above the surface, and remains in that position, holding on by some weed or branch, until the danger has passed.

Instances have been known of its feigning death, after the manner of the corncrake, as a last chance of escape.

If unmolested, the water-hen will become very tame, and will come and feed with domestic fowls in the farmyard. It rears two or three broods in the year, and it has been observed that the brood first hatched helps to feed and look after the young of the second brood, but as soon as the third brood is hatched the first is sent about its business. If the nest is much exposed, the water-hen will sometimes cover it with the leaves of dried flags before he leaves it, but it is not often that this is done,



and it can scarcely be called a distinguishing habit, as it is in the case of the grebe.

Less common than the last-mentioned, the coot is yet a well-known bird, and, when swimming in company with the water-hen, is easily distinguished from it by the white patch on its head. In its habits it is like the water-hen, but is shyer and more retiring. It is also stronger on the wing, and takes long migrations from one part of the kingdom to another. Its nest is also much more substantially built, and often floats upon the surface of the water, held in its place only by the reeds growing around it. A strong wind once drove the nest of a coot from its moorings, and it floated hither and thither on the surface of the lake, according to the direction of the wind. Notwithstanding this, the old bird continued to sit, and eventually brought off her brood.

The scenery of our larger lakes would not be complete without the presence of the grebes. The larger one, the great-crested grebe, is the rarer, but we think it quite possible that it is the more generally known to the majority of fishermen. Its size and remarkable appearance ensure its being observed; and then it keeps so carefully out in the open water, away from other birds, that it cannot be overlooked when it is present on the mere. If you row near it, it turns its head suspiciously from side to side, and sinks low in the water, until only its head and long neck are visible above the sur-

face then, if you approach nearer, it dives with the quickness of lightning. It is quite impossible to say where it will rise after its dive, for it will swim under water a long way, and twist and turn about if followed. Its nest is simply a mass of black and soaking weeds, almost level with the surface of the water; and the eggs, which are white when laid, soon become stained and darkened by the decaying vegetable matter. When the old bird leaves the nest she carefully covers the eggs with weeds, so that a casual observer would be far from suspecting that that ill-shaped mass of wet weed was a nest containing eggs.

The smaller grebe or dabchick is common everywhere, where there are lakes, ponds, or quiet rivers. In its breeding habits it is like its larger brother, but it is not quite so shy; and if you will only keep quite still, you may watch it at only a few yards' distance; but if you move but a finger it dives instanter, with a very little splash, and a kick of its legs. If it apprehend danger, it will keep under water for an incredible length of time; but if it be not much frightened, it will pop up again like a cork, and shake the water off itself in silvery drops. It is a very pretty sight to see a pair of old birds feeding their young, in some clear post between the floating vegetation. The young ones are such little black dots, and the movements of all of them are so quick and comical, that one cannot help being interested and amused.

The pretty little snipe-like bird that skims with graceful flight from the advancing angler, or runs along the sandy bays of the stream, or lightly over the lily leaves on the placid pool, is the sand-piper, a bird not uncommon by most of our rivers. It makes its nest in some sly hole in the bank, or even dispenses with a nest altogether, and lays its eggs in a hollow on the ground.

Such, then, are the chief among an angler's acquaintances, but there are many others he would not willingly pass. The sand-martins sweeping and whirling over the stream, dashing this way and that, and altering their course with wonderful celerity, in the pursuit of their insect prey, and drilling the gravel escarpment with the numerous holes of their nesting-places; the water-wagtail merrily wagging its tail, and snapping up the insects at the margin of the water; the gaudy dragon-flies hovering and darting in the blazing sunlight; the shining water-beetles gyrating, multitudinous, in the quiet pools —these and many others come within the term of the angler's acquaintances. And may they not be the angler's *friends* too? Even those which are avowedly destructive to fish, is it too great a stretch of clemency to spare them from slaughter, and show them at least negative friendship? Live and let live is a good motto. There is enough and to spare for all who are not greedy; and where the fish are decreasing, it is not from the depredations of those whose cause we plead, but from the folly and



wastefulness of man himself. Drains and the refuse of manufactories—these are the causes which lead to the blank days of the angler.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God that loveth us,
He made and loveth all."



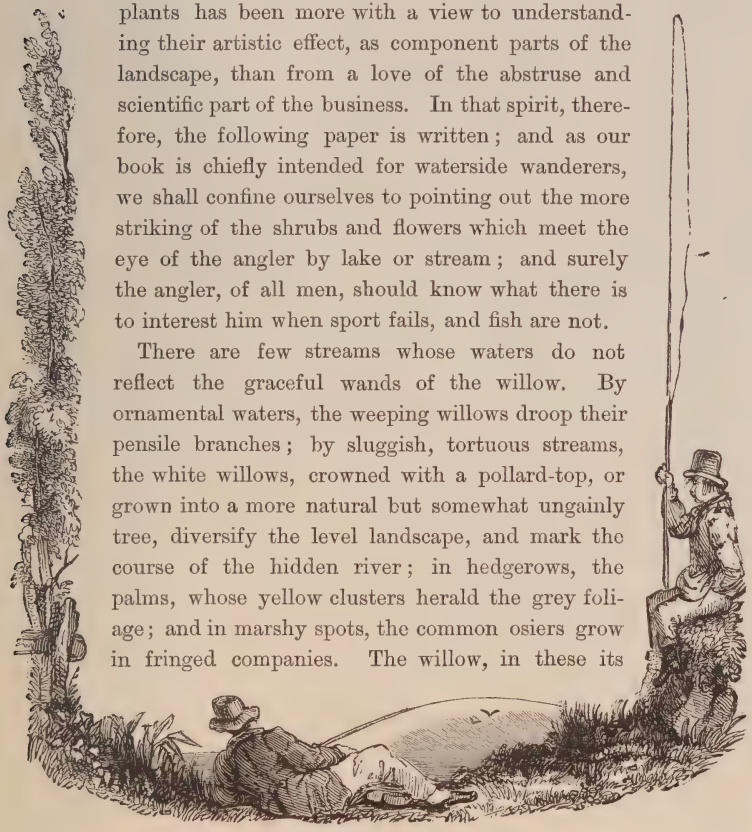
WATERSIDE PLANTS.

It is a true saying, that half the beauty of a thing is lost to those who do not know how to look for its beauty. The man who "knows when a thing pleases him and when it doesn't," is not the man to appreciate a good picture. In like manner, the man who has no more than a surface knowledge of the natural things about him, loses more than half the pleasure to be derived from a country ramble. He sees a general dash of colour: a blue, or red, or yellow flower, but nothing more:

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is nothing more."

It is something, however, to know the names of the primroses, daisies, and other common flowers. The mere recognition of a score or so of flowers and shrubs increases the charm of a stroll over the meadows, and through the green lanes, and drives away the monotony of a mere "constitutional." It is astonishing how little most people know of the lovely plants and flowers that meet their view every day in the country. Even though a man may be an excellent general naturalist, practical botany

is, perhaps, the one study he has neglected. Doubtless the dryness of the technical part of the pursuit—the long names and the minute subdivisions—have something to do with it, but we think the *vastness* of the study has more. What is the use, one asks, of beginning when it is impossible ever to get near the end? There is a great deal in this, and we must confess that our own study of plants has been more with a view to understanding their artistic effect, as component parts of the landscape, than from a love of the abstruse and scientific part of the business. In that spirit, therefore, the following paper is written; and as our book is chiefly intended for waterside wanderers, we shall confine ourselves to pointing out the more striking of the shrubs and flowers which meet the eye of the angler by lake or stream; and surely the angler, of all men, should know what there is to interest him when sport fails, and fish are not.



There are few streams whose waters do not reflect the graceful wands of the willow. By ornamental waters, the weeping willows droop their pensile branches; by sluggish, tortuous streams, the white willows, crowned with a pollard-top, or grown into a more natural but somewhat ungainly tree, diversify the level landscape, and mark the course of the hidden river; in hedgerows, the palms, whose yellow clusters herald the grey foliage; and in marshy spots, the common osiers grow in fringed companies. The willow, in these its

different species, is a well-known and prominent object. Well known! true; but how many know the number of species of willow that are more or less common in this country?—Five or six, of course. No, seventy, or thereabouts, be the same more or less, as our legal friends say. Certainly not less either, for the willow has a bewildering way of striking out an apparently new species now and then; a freak which may be very amusing to it, but gives no end of trouble to botanists.

The pollard-willow, with its stumpy, many-leaved head, has often afforded us concealment, as from its overhanging shelter we have fished for chub in the river reach below.

All the willows have a silvery-grey under-surface to the leaves; and as the breeze sweeps down the river, the willows quiver and whiten as they proudly shake out their garments, while hypocritically bending away from the too-eagerly wooing wind.

Fairest of all the many-faced clan is the goat-willow, round-leaved sallow, or palm. When the "bleak winds of March make us shudder and shiver," the long wands of the palm stand out stark and bronze by the steel-blue pools. Then the rich red-brown buds open, and with silver-silken lustre the numerous catkins clothe the rods, so that the bushes become like white and shining clouds dropped upon the yellow-green fields. Then, when the primrose peeps, golden-eyed, from the old dead leaves and wind-laid brambles, the silver buds grow



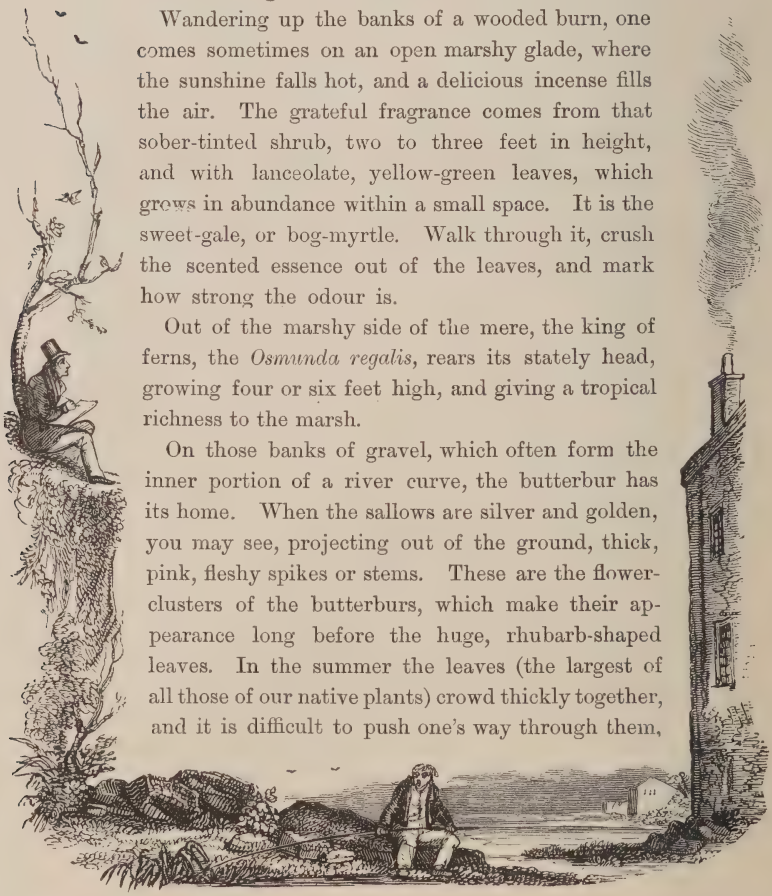
and deepen into gold, and the clustered rods shine brighter in the white spring sunlight than the yellowest hair of blue-eyed children.

The osier beds are great harbours of insect life, and "wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," and so among the osiers tits, warblers, and other birds congregate and nest.

The dark-green fringe of the alder covers the margin of many a pool and river; sometimes, where banks are narrow, giving a gloomy look to the scene, but at times beautifying, with the richness and picturesque solidity of its foliage, what would otherwise be a flat and dreary plain; but the foliage is too heavy to wave much in the wind, and this lack of motion gives it a sullen look at times. A quiet curve and bay, with alders drooping over it, and a willow in the corresponding promontory! How often have we admired a scene formed of such simple elements, while our loaded pike-bait clove the deep water, or our roach-float calmly glided past. Many a river in our more level counties, which is now picturesque and lovely, would, if deprived of its willows and alders, be but a sluggish, uninteresting canal. The glossy leaves of the alder are not so pleasant to the touch as those of most ther trees. They are harsh and sticky, and this is a drawback where they are numerous and one has to push through them. Alder-wood is one of the best for making that "villanous saltpetre," and

it is good for wood-carving and turning. It has, when cut, a pale, flesh-coloured tint, which takes polish well. Under water, as piles, it is almost indestructible.

The alder has another recommendation—it retains its foliage far on into the winter.



Wandering up the banks of a wooded burn, one comes sometimes on an open marshy glade, where the sunshine falls hot, and a delicious incense fills the air. The grateful fragrance comes from that sober-tinted shrub, two to three feet in height, and with lanceolate, yellow-green leaves, which grows in abundance within a small space. It is the sweet-gale, or bog-myrtle. Walk through it, crush the scented essence out of the leaves, and mark how strong the odour is.

Out of the marshy side of the mere, the king of ferns, the *Osmunda regalis*, rears its stately head, growing four or six feet high, and giving a tropical richness to the marsh.

On those banks of gravel, which often form the inner portion of a river curve, the butterbur has its home. When the sallows are silver and golden, you may see, projecting out of the ground, thick, pink, fleshy spikes or stems. These are the flower-clusters of the butterburs, which make their appearance long before the huge, rhubarb-shaped leaves. In the summer the leaves (the largest of all those of our native plants) crowd thickly together, and it is difficult to push one's way through them,

for they are stiff and strong. They form an attractive feature in the landscape, hiding, as they do, all the barren spots. Under the shelter of the roof of its leaves, and between the pillars of its stems, the water-fowl feed and take refuge. We are very fond of the butterbur, because of its size and sturdy strength, and its picturesque effect in brook scenery. Its roots extend rapidly, and send up shoots here and there. Where it has seized upon some bit of marshy meadow-ground, as it sometimes does, and gains a headway, it is most difficult to eradicate.

The queen of the meadows, and not of the meadows alone, but the woodland glades and the shady lanes, is in our eyes the feathery, fragrant meadowsweet. It is not by any means exclusively a waterside plant, but as it is most abundant in the fertile "haughs" by the river-side, it may well be included in this chapter. In July and August its white blossoms, green-tinged and creamy, quiver in crowded clusters in the summer air. Amid the crowd of gaudy blossoms which at this time burst upon our ken, the meadowsweet looks pure and ethereal—a lily among scarlet roses, sweet seventeen by the side of painted forty. Often the angler wades knee-deep through it, as it spreads its summer snow by the streamlet; and light as snow-flakes, and as graceful in texture, are its tiny blossoms. In the dew-wet night it gleams ghost-like in the margin of the wood, and loads the gloaming with its sweet yet heavy odour. It dances in the

morning breeze, and nods gaily at its distorted reflection in the rippling lake, and the deer inhale its almond scent as they come down to drink. It is a tender and delicate plant, and dies soon after it is plucked; so, grasp it not, but pass your hand lightly through its blossoms, and provoke it to a greater fragrance.

In the spring the "wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows grey;" the water-crowfoot lifts its white blossoms over every pool or slow-moving stream; in the marshy meadows the cardamine, or lady's-smock, makes its appearance in abundance. Its pink-white flowers are so fresh and pleasant, as they nod over the old-year's grass and sprouting flags, that it is a great favourite of ours, and we welcome its appearance like that of the primrose and violet.

Every one knows the daffodil:—

"A host of golden daffodils
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze,
Continuous as the stars that shine
And tumble in the milky way,
They stretched, in never-ending line,
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance!

sings Wordsworth, and be sure his eyes rested with pleasure on the golden carpet the daffodil spreads in the marshy meadow hollows.





Where mountain streams struggle through long green moss, the small yellow umbels of the golden saxifrage, and its yellow-green leaves, struggle through the wet moss like a stream of gold, shining in bright contrast to the vivid green of its mossy cushion.

In June and July the margin of our rivers is in many places made most beautiful by the handsome purple loose-strife—a plant with a long, narrow leaf, and tall, tapering spikes, a foot long, of rich purplish-red flowers, on a stem two to four feet high.

In most meadows the silver-weed presents to our notice its large, yellow, velvety flowers, growing close to the creeping stem and pinnated leaves, which, in large masses, shine silvery with the silken down on their under-surface.

The forget-me-not has fame enough for its loveliness and its pretty name, and no flower would be more missed than this were it never more to gleam blue and bright from the lush vegetation of the water-edges. It has, nevertheless, rivals by the waterside that run it hard, and of its own colour and semblance. One of these is the brooklime, a common plant, in flower all the summer, and bearing bright blue flowers on a stout, juicy stem, about a foot high, with thick, dark-green leaves. In the water, among the roots of the iris and reeds, it does its best to rival its more graceful neighbour the forget-me-not.



Where there are large marshes, many acres are often covered with the snowy white cotton-grasses. It seems a pity the silky globes cannot be utilised for some purpose; but, in the meantime, we are well content to see the marsh flooded with their silver overflow, and shining in the sunlight. Growing in the water, on the borders of slow streams with gravelly bottoms, and in the shallows of lakes, one often sees that singular plant the mare's-tail. It has an erect and jointed stem, growing ten or twelve inches above the surface; its leaves are linear, or narrow and grass-like, and grow in whorls at intervals up the stem. It is easily pulled to pieces at the joints. Besides its singularity and picturesqueness of appearance, it is said to be of use in purifying stagnant water, and absorbing the inflammable air.

Cats like the great wild valerian, if nobody else does. Its powerful scent has a great attraction for them, and they will roll in the leaves, and smell, and grow almost frantic with excitement; and if any one were to put a small piece in his pocket, the shyest pussy would court his company. The valerian is one of the most conspicuous of the plants which grow on the river borders, standing as it does from three to four feet high, and with large clusters of pale pink flowers. Its powerful scent is decidedly unpleasant when close, and, in its case, distance is certainly required to add enchantment to the smell; but as an item of scenery

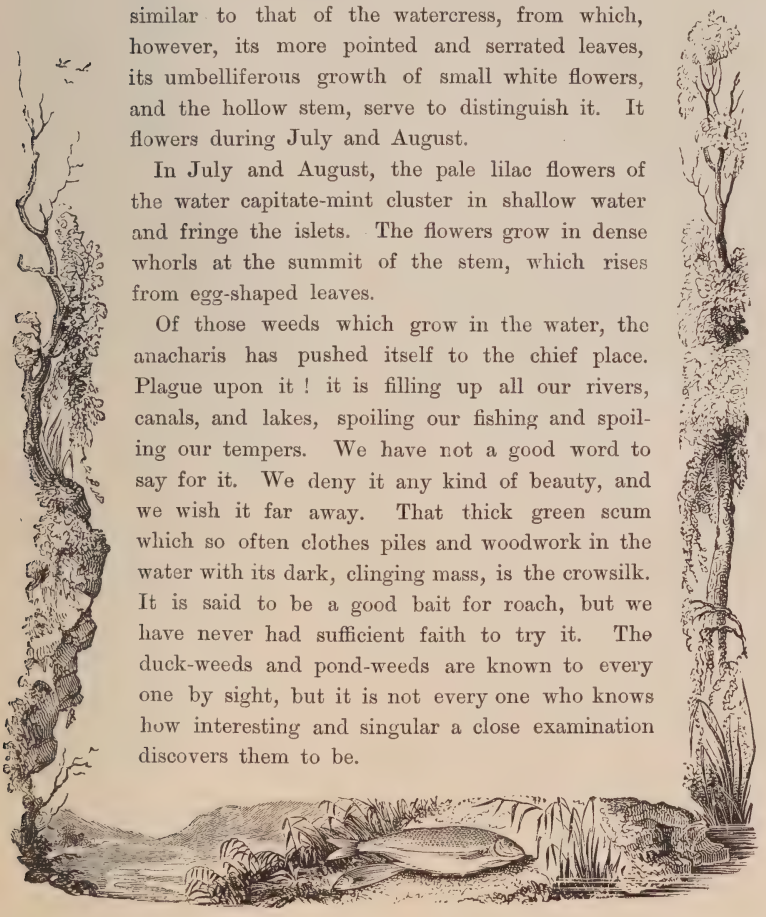


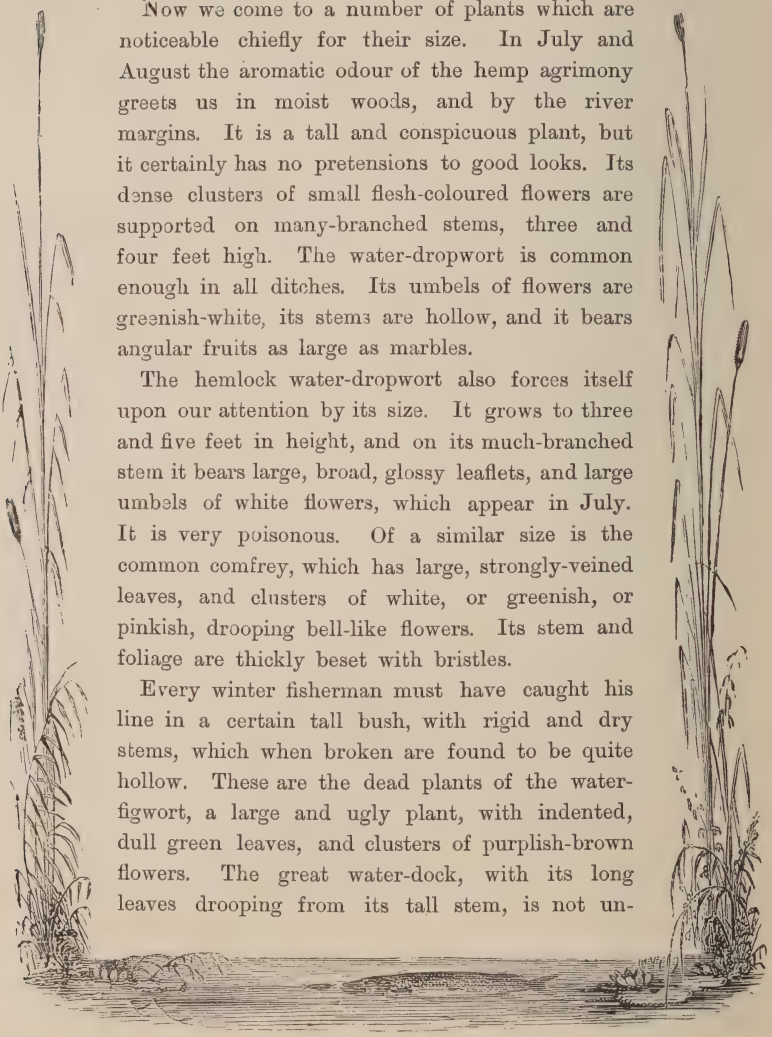
it is of value, and its presence enlivens many a rushy-margined stream.

Watercress gatherers should beware not to gather by mistake the marshwort, or fool's watercress. The general appearance of the plant is similar to that of the watercress, from which, however, its more pointed and serrated leaves, its umbelliferous growth of small white flowers, and the hollow stem, serve to distinguish it. It flowers during July and August.

In July and August, the pale lilac flowers of the water capitate-mint cluster in shallow water and fringe the islets. The flowers grow in dense whorls at the summit of the stem, which rises from egg-shaped leaves.

Of those weeds which grow in the water, the anacharis has pushed itself to the chief place. Plague upon it ! it is filling up all our rivers, canals, and lakes, spoiling our fishing and spoiling our tempers. We have not a good word to say for it. We deny it any kind of beauty, and we wish it far away. That thick green scum which so often clothes piles and woodwork in the water with its dark, clinging mass, is the crowsilk. It is said to be a good bait for roach, but we have never had sufficient faith to try it. The duck-weeds and pond-weeds are known to every one by sight, but it is not every one who knows how interesting and singular a close examination discovers them to be.





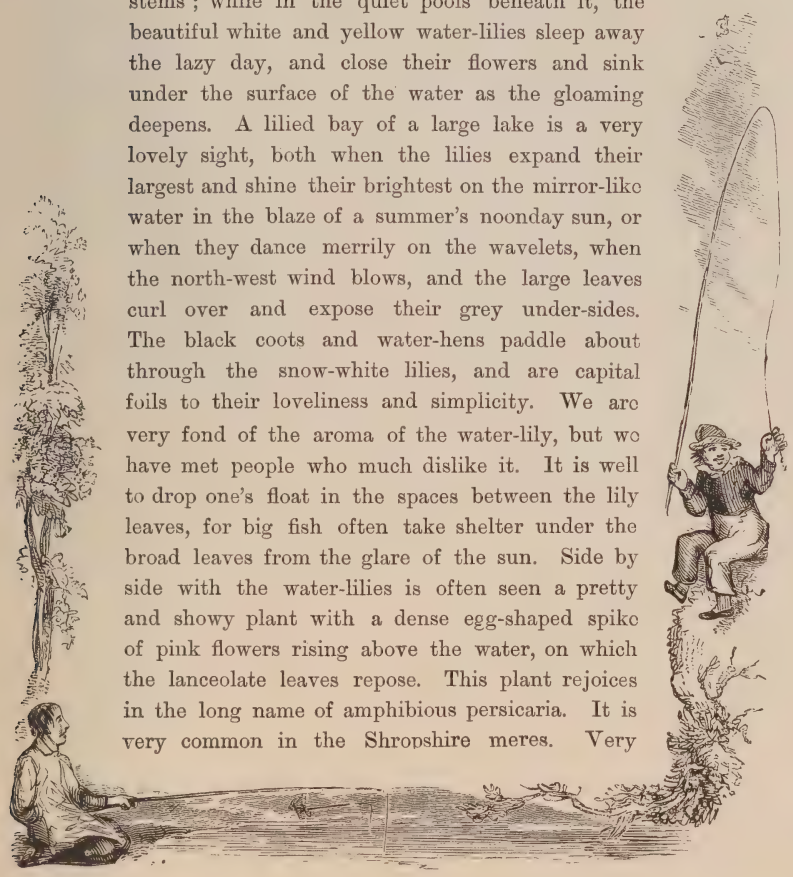
Now we come to a number of plants which are noticeable chiefly for their size. In July and August the aromatic odour of the hemp agrimony greets us in moist woods, and by the river margins. It is a tall and conspicuous plant, but it certainly has no pretensions to good looks. Its dense clusters of small flesh-coloured flowers are supported on many-branched stems, three and four feet high. The water-dropwort is common enough in all ditches. Its umbels of flowers are greenish-white, its stems are hollow, and it bears angular fruits as large as marbles.

The hemlock water-dropwort also forces itself upon our attention by its size. It grows to three and five feet in height, and on its much-branched stem it bears large, broad, glossy leaflets, and large umbels of white flowers, which appear in July. It is very poisonous. Of a similar size is the common comfrey, which has large, strongly-veined leaves, and clusters of white, or greenish, or pinkish, drooping bell-like flowers. Its stem and foliage are thickly beset with bristles.

Every winter fisherman must have caught his line in a certain tall bush, with rigid and dry stems, which when broken are found to be quite hollow. These are the dead plants of the water-figwort, a large and ugly plant, with indented, dull green leaves, and clusters of purplish-brown flowers. The great water-dock, with its long leaves drooping from its tall stem, is not un-

graceful in its effect among the sedges and rushes.

What a bright bit of colour the yellow flower of the iris, or yellow water-flag, presents on the summit of its sword-shaped, glossy green leaf-stems ; while in the quiet pools beneath it, the beautiful white and yellow water-lilies sleep away the lazy day, and close their flowers and sink under the surface of the water as the gloaming deepens. A lilied bay of a large lake is a very lovely sight, both when the lilies expand their largest and shine their brightest on the mirror-like water in the blaze of a summer's noonday sun, or when they dance merrily on the wavelets, when the north-west wind blows, and the large leaves curl over and expose their grey under-sides. The black coots and water-hens paddle about through the snow-white lilies, and are capital foils to their loveliness and simplicity. We are very fond of the aroma of the water-lily, but we have met people who much dislike it. It is well to drop one's float in the spaces between the lily leaves, for big fish often take shelter under the broad leaves from the glare of the sun. Side by side with the water-lilies is often seen a pretty and showy plant with a dense egg-shaped spike of pink flowers rising above the water, on which the lanceolate leaves repose. This plant rejoices in the long name of amphibious persicaria. It is very common in the Shropshire meres. Very



rare, but very elegant, is a plant called the water lobelia, which grows in some mountain tarns and in the Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes, where the surface in places is closely carpeted with its matted leaves. It has clusters of light blue flowers, drooping from a stem a foot high.

Very arrow-like must be the plant which bears the English name of arrowhead and the Latin name of *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, and its leaves are indeed very arrow-shaped. Quiet pools and bays of rivers are often carpeted with the large, bright leaves, from which in July and August rise whorls of pretty white flowers on a stalk seven or eight inches above the water.

Amid the rushes the water plantain grows tall and large, with delicate, small, rose-coloured flowers; and below, among the lilies, the kidney-shaped leaves and white three-petalled flower of the frogbit may often be seen.

These are but a few of the commoner flowers and plants which meet the eye of the angler on his waterside rambles; and they are pleasant pictures enough, severally and collectively set as they are in a framework of waving rushes of many kinds, reeds brown and feathery, bur-reeds with clustered fruits, and reed mace and bulrush with purple and substantial heads. Colour, beauty, motion, lightness, elegance—these are the elements of the picture of which these waterside plants are the canvas and the paints.





BREAM FISHING.

It is a land of deep rivers, flowing with quiet current through miles of marsh, and by broad lagoons whose banks are fringed with reeds. Three rivers, a score of shallow meres, locally called "broads," and deep, slowly-moving dykes, combine to make this eastern county a very attractive one for the angler and the naturalist. Those who have been in Norfolk will not fail to recognise the *locale* of the spot we describe. Twenty miles and more inland from the coast stretches a wide, flat tract of country, through which the rivers Bure, Yare, and Waveney flow with sinuous courses to unite at Breydon Water, and debouch into the sea by the quaint semi-Dutch town of Great Yarmouth; the Yare, the chiefest of the rivers, carries the traffic of the ancient city of Norwich to the sea; the Waveney, the clearest of the rivers, runs from the little town of Beccles on the south of the Yare; and the Bure passes by the pretty village of Wroxham, and the beautiful "broad" of that ilk, and many others, on the north.

Along the course of these rivers, and generally

communicating with them by narrow reed-fringed channels, are the sheets of water known as "broads."



It may be imagined that such an extent of water must harbour many fish, and the surmise would be correct. The chief products are bream and pike. The pike are getting scarcer, owing to the great prevalence of the practice of "liggering," as setting trimmers is called in Norfolk, and the indiscriminate netting of under-sized fish. This unwise mode of fishing has had another necessary, though unfortunate, step; that is, the closing or preserving of many of the "broads," so that the vast expanses of water which were formerly alive with fishermen, are now silent and lonely, save for the clamour of the wild-fowl; and the middle-class angler is bereft of his pleasure.*

The bream, on the contrary, are as numerous as ever, and the Norfolk angler counts his catch, not by the pound weight, but by the stone. Fishing for bream may be said to be an institution of Norfolk, and to judge by the numbers of London men who annually visit the Yare, at Reedham and Coldham, its fame has spread wide.

It was our lot to go straight from a trout-fishing county in the west to a residence for some time in Norfolk; and while we fully appreciated the ad-

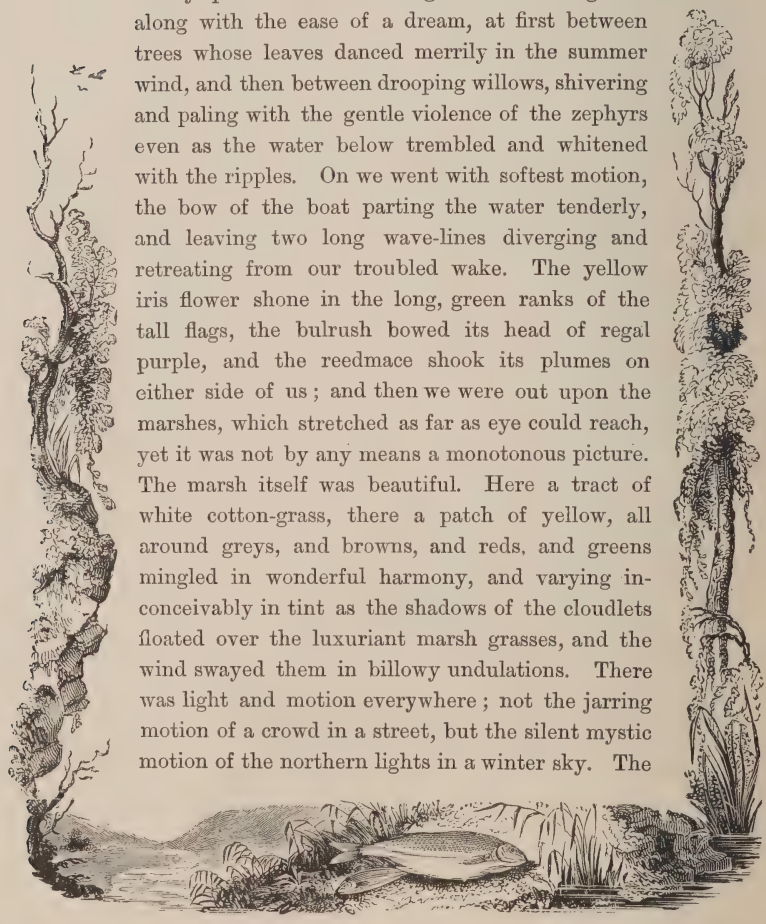
* An Act has just been passed to protect and regulate the fishing on the Norfolk broads and rivers, so that they will soon regain their pristine fame.—Ed.

vantages of that county for those who were fond of yachting in the summer and pike-fishing in the autumn and winter, yet we looked with great contempt upon bream-fishing. We had never seen a bream but once, and that was while we were perch-fishing in Shropshire, and hooked a large, white, bellows-like fish, which broke away, leaving us to guess that it was a bream; and we disdained to angle for fish that were reputed to be so slimy that we had to take hold of them with a cloth when captured, and so uneatable that they were only fit for manure. We remember, too, that we felt a repugnance to fishing in such sluggish waters, after throwing a fly on the sparkling, dashing rivers and streams of Wales. For weeks we went about with a moping air, like a kitten in a strange house, longing for the sound of rushing water and the glint and dazzle of a cascade, so wearisome was the smooth, oily flow of the level waters. But at last, when the memory of the salmon pools and the grayling fords began to fade, we grew more content, and soon we discovered that there was a singular beauty in the slow, wide rivers and the flat far-reaching marshes. And it was a cruise we had down the Yare and up the Bure, and a little bream-fishing by the way, that completed our conversion; and this is how it came about.

Two of us hired a boat, a tiny large-sailed thing, with a centre-board, and a fast sailer, although somewhat ticklish to handle. We provisioned her



well, particularly in the matter of bottled beer and tobacco; and we took care to have plenty of fishing tackle with us. We started from Norwich with a light breeze, which wafted us gently along at a steady pace. With our large sail set we glided along with the ease of a dream, at first between trees whose leaves danced merrily in the summer wind, and then between drooping willows, shivering and paling with the gentle violence of the zephyrs even as the water below trembled and whitened with the ripples. On we went with softest motion, the bow of the boat parting the water tenderly, and leaving two long wave-lines diverging and retreating from our troubled wake. The yellow iris flower shone in the long, green ranks of the tall flags, the bulrush bowed its head of regal purple, and the reedmace shook its plumes on either side of us; and then we were out upon the marshes, which stretched as far as eye could reach, yet it was not by any means a monotonous picture. The marsh itself was beautiful. Here a tract of white cotton-grass, there a patch of yellow, all around greys, and browns, and reds, and greens mingled in wonderful harmony, and varying inconceivably in tint as the shadows of the cloudlets floated over the luxuriant marsh grasses, and the wind swayed them in billowy undulations. There was light and motion everywhere; not the jarring motion of a crowd in a street, but the silent mystic motion of the northern lights in a winter sky. The



red and white cattle lay and stood in picturesque groups, or waded knee-deep in the grass with bent-down heads and lazily-switching tails. Windmills whirled their great arms over the far-reaching plain, and ever and anon we passed a clump of trees, in the midst of which nestled a small farm-house or inn, with a broad, flat ferry-boat lying by the river bank.

All down here the river is banked up on either side, so that the level of the river surface is actually higher than the dykes which drain the marsh into it. Hence at the end of each important drain there is a small windmill, which works a pump, and so lifts the water from the marsh into the river.

The prettiest feature, however, in the whole scene is the presence of numbers of yachts and wherries. The former with their snow-white sails, and the latter with their huge brown or black ones, look very singular indeed in the distance, for, low down as we are, the river is invisible, and the vessels seem tacking and sailing about in the marsh itself.

The day wore on, and at intervals we passed small boats moored by the bank, the occupants of which were fishing for bream and roach.

"By the shade of Walton! but they look very happy and comfortable yonder; and they seem to be taking some heavy fish. We must try bream-fishing ourselves, for, after all, it doesn't seem such

bad fun; but then, under such a sky and on such a day, any kind of fishing is idyllic in its appearance."

Presently the breeze died out as the sunlight softened into the evening shades, and we floated listlessly as far as Coldham Hall, a riverside inn, surrounded by tall poplars. We landed here with the intention of staying the night, and moored our boat to the staith. Our curiosity was at once aroused by the sight of a large pair of scales, suspended from a cross bar between two poplar trees. Upon entering the inn, we found a supper ready laid, that betokened the expectation of many guests and the satisfying of mighty appetites. We had evidently fallen upon our feet, as the saying is, and our stomachs rejoiced at the sight of such good things. But, the reason, the reason? we inquired; and then we learned that there was a fishing match, and that nearly thirty boats were out engaged in competing for the prizes. Each boat was allowed three rods, and all of them were down the river, a mile away. The match must be over now. Aye! there they come; and looking down the long, shining stretch of river, we saw them coming back in a pretty compact body of black dots. In advance of them was a yacht, with all canvas set and boomed out, gliding on like a ghost, impelled by some faint lingerings of the breeze that caught her lofty topsails. Out of the dull grey east she came, with wings outspread, as if in haste to reach



the sunset west; and behind her, with dull, material motion, were the fishers' boats, lightening the grey river with the flash of their oar-dips.

The yacht reached her anchorage in a little lagoon off the river amid the poplars, through the branches of which her red pennant fluttered. The boats came up and the crews landed, each man with a heavy load of silver-scaled roach and bream. Then we saw the use of the big scales. Amid the greatest interest and anxiety, and a vast amount of talk and argument, the various takes were weighed and noted. The winning boat had taken more than ten stone weight, chiefly of bream, and the largest fish was four pounds. The fish were then spread out on the grass, and a goodly show they made. We were permitted to join the fishermen at the festive meal which afterwards ensued, and we can safely say that we never before or since heard such wonderful angling stories, or met with such apparently skilful anglers. The class of men who composed the assemblage rather puzzled us. Many of them seemed to be small tradesmen, but the majority were of a lower class; but what their occupations might be when at home we could not guess—artisans of some kind, with an affectation of the sportsman in their dress, which gave them a nondescript look. They were capital fellows, though, and we spent a merry evening with them, and imbibed no end of angling lore.

What surprised us much was that they should

have such good sport, seeing that during the night a terrific thunderstorm came on with torrents of rain. Standing at the door, and gazing at the brilliant light and the intense darkness which in quick recurrence overspread the marsh, and listening to the savage crack and heavy roll of the thunder, and the hissing of the rain on the river, we thought we had never seen such a storm. The tide, which "backs" the water of the Yare as far as Norwich, had risen to a favourable height for bream-fishing, our informant told us, and for two or three hours the fish had bitten as fast as possible. When the tide is right, and the big bream do come on the feed, the catches are often almost incredible in weight and number, and the largest fish appear to be caught where the water is slightly brackish.

We fished ourselves the whole of the next day; and although it was *after rain*, neither we nor any of the other half-dozen boats out caught more than a dozen small ones each.

A few days afterwards we found ourselves sailing up the Bure, hastening to keep an appointment to meet some friends, and have a day's bream-fishing near Ranworth Broad. We had hoped to reach Ranworth that night, but the wind died away towards evening, as it usually does in the summer time; and long before we reached Acle we had to take to our oars. The darkness came on too, and we had rather a weary pull ere we reached Acle Bridge. While rowing along in the deep gloaming



we saw several floats of wood on the surface of the water. We at once jumped to the conclusion that some poacher had been at work setting night lines, and with a laudable desire to frustrate his evil designs, we attempted to haul the supposed lines in. Fortunately for ourselves, we could not move the weight at the bottom, for the pieces of wood turned out to be the floats of the eel nets which are nightly set in the river by persons who make a regular trade of it, and whose take that night we might have spoiled. We did not guess what the floats were, however, until we came to a turn in the river, where, on the bank, a mysterious frame-work rose from the rushes, and there loomed against the olive sky the large circles of the eel nets which were hung up to dry.

The next day we sped before pleasant breeze swiftly up to Ranworth. We were to meet our friends at an inn on the banks of the adjacent Broad, and turning up a wide channel we ran between lofty reeds, between the stems of which the coots and water-hens swam and nodded their heads, and the reed-wren suspended its purse-like nest. We could see the Broad every now and then through narrow openings on our left, and as we seemed to be running parallel to it we conceived the idea of taking a short cut. Entering one of the narrow channels, we steered boldly for the open water, which appeared to be only a hundred yards off. The passage presently dwindled away,

and we found ourselves charging the reeds and forcing a passage through them. With the way we had on the boat, and the wind dead aft, it seemed as if we should succeed in our endeavour; and as we passed along, the reeds parted in front of us, and bowed down right and left with a steady rushing sound; but one of us was an ornithologist, and as we passed a small hillock, a bird like a landrail, but smaller, flew up. The lover of birds rushed frantically to the mast, and, loosing the halyard, let the sail down with a run, careless whether it went into the water, or the yard hit us on the head.

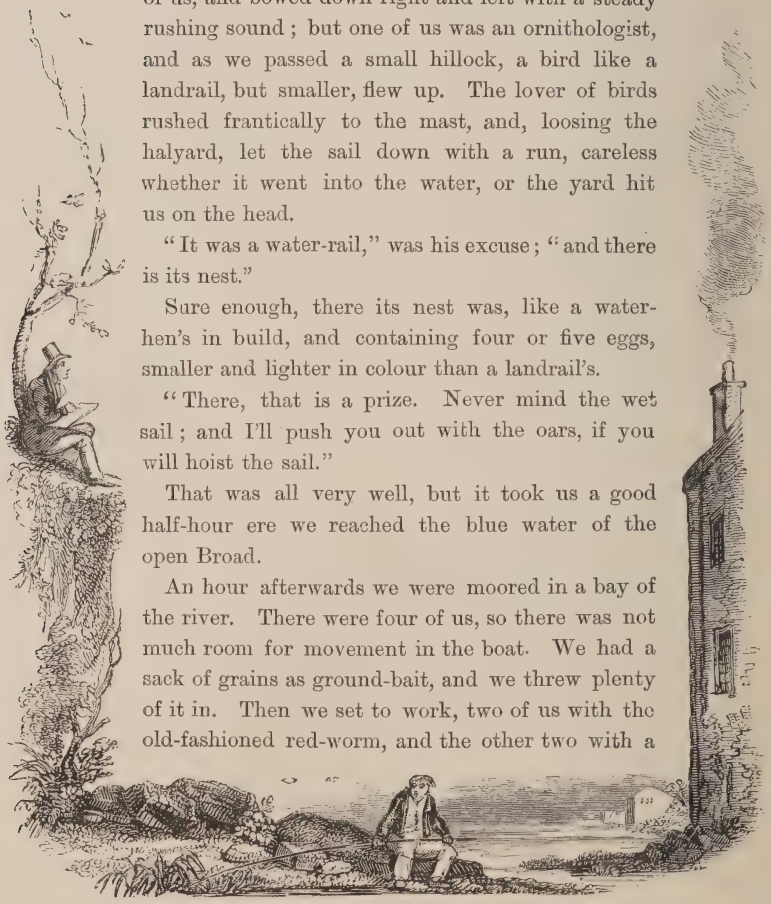
"It was a water-rail," was his excuse; "and there is its nest."

Sure enough, there its nest was, like a water-hen's in build, and containing four or five eggs, smaller and lighter in colour than a landrail's.

"There, that is a prize. Never mind the wet sail; and I'll push you out with the oars, if you will hoist the sail."

That was all very well, but it took us a good half-hour ere we reached the blue water of the open Broad.

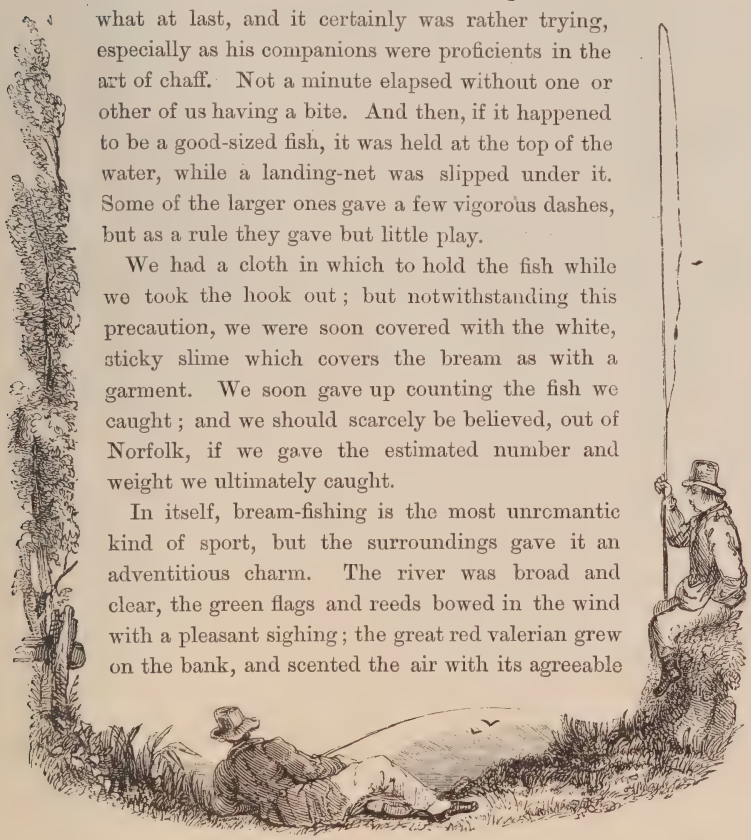
An hour afterwards we were moored in a bay of the river. There were four of us, so there was not much room for movement in the boat. We had a sack of grains as ground-bait, and we threw plenty of it in. Then we set to work, two of us with the old-fashioned red-worm, and the other two with a



paste coloured red with Judson's dye. One seemed to be as efficacious as the other, but a rather singular circumstance happened to one of the paste fishers. He was a very big, portly man, and he caught nothing but the smallest fish. While the rest of us were pulling out fine fellows of two and three pounds in weight, he continued catching tiny ones, not six inches long. He lost his temper somewhat at last, and it certainly was rather trying, especially as his companions were proficients in the art of chaff. Not a minute elapsed without one or other of us having a bite. And then, if it happened to be a good-sized fish, it was held at the top of the water, while a landing-net was slipped under it. Some of the larger ones gave a few vigorous dashes, but as a rule they gave but little play.

We had a cloth in which to hold the fish while we took the hook out; but notwithstanding this precaution, we were soon covered with the white, sticky slime which covers the bream as with a garment. We soon gave up counting the fish we caught; and we should scarcely be believed, out of Norfolk, if we gave the estimated number and weight we ultimately caught.

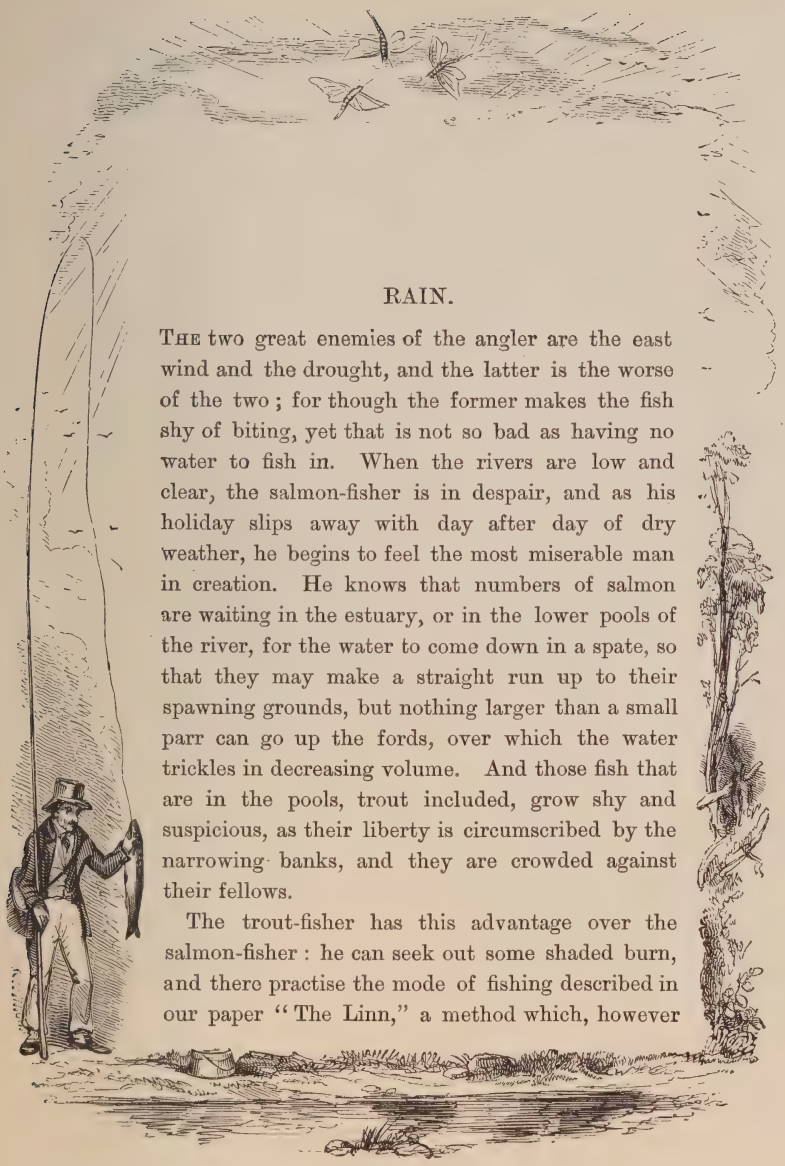
In itself, bream-fishing is the most unromantic kind of sport, but the surroundings gave it an adventitious charm. The river was broad and clear, the green flags and reeds bowed in the wind with a pleasant sighing; the great red valerian grew on the bank, and scented the air with its agreeable



odour; the snipe hung in the blue sky like a lark, and the sound of its "drumming" or "bleating" floated about us like the voice of a ventriloquist; a hawk, probably a marsh-harrier, swept over us, stilling the song of the reed-wrens and the twitter of the bearded tits. Yachts glided by with all canvas set; wherries rushed past with the white foam spurting up at their bows, and their great sails flapped thunderously as they gybed or tacked at each twist of the river.

With all these sights and sounds about us, the fish biting merrily, the sun warm and the breeze cool, we enjoyed our bream-fishing amazingly, and felt sorry when the sun sank in the crimson west, and the river grew black in the gloaming.

One word of caution to the bream-fisher: moor your boat on the *concave* side of a bend, and not on the convex. The wherries are often compelled to "shave" the corners, or lose the wind, and tack; and it is a pity to give them the trouble and delay of doing this, for as a rule they do all they can to oblige the angler.



RAIN.

The two great enemies of the angler are the east wind and the drought, and the latter is the worse of the two; for though the former makes the fish shy of biting, yet that is not so bad as having no water to fish in. When the rivers are low and clear, the salmon-fisher is in despair, and as his holiday slips away with day after day of dry weather, he begins to feel the most miserable man in creation. He knows that numbers of salmon are waiting in the estuary, or in the lower pools of the river, for the water to come down in a spate, so that they may make a straight run up to their spawning grounds, but nothing larger than a small parr can go up the fords, over which the water trickles in decreasing volume. And those fish that are in the pools, trout included, grow shy and suspicious, as their liberty is circumscribed by the narrowing banks, and they are crowded against their fellows.

The trout-fisher has this advantage over the salmon-fisher: he can seek out some shaded burn, and there practise the mode of fishing described in our paper "The Linn," a method which, however

killing in small burns, is not so certain of success in wide rivers.

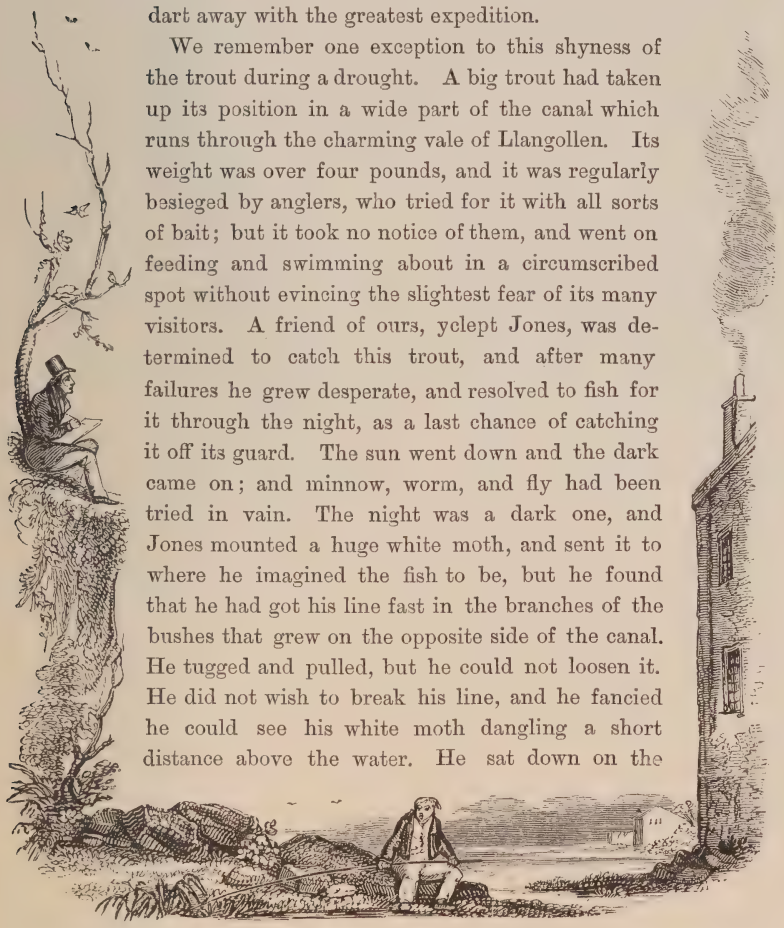
A drought! What a picture the word represents—a sky blue in the summit of its arc, and a dull grey where it clasps the panting earth in its misty girdle. There is no clear defined line in the horizon; the woods lose themselves in haze; the hills are less substantial than clouds; and when out to seaward you look at a low, straight line, taking it to be the limit of the visible sea, you are astonished at seeing a vessel sailing along far above it, apparently in the air. The sunshine is a blinding glare, pervading every nook and corner of the parched and dusty landscape. There is the maximum of sunshine and the minimum of shade; the grass is burned off the brown hill-side, and even the grasshoppers are too lazy to jump and too hot to chirp. The foliage of the trees acquires a dull, dead tint of green, and the leaves droop and curl, thereby letting wider sun-shafts strike the glades below, that should be soft and moist, but are hard and dry.

The river-beds are great tracts of white stones, simply darkened as with varnish where the water trickles over them, but none the less visible, so transparent is the stream. Like as a skater upon clear ice, seeing the deep holes over which he glides, and the masses of waving weeds below him, deems the ice to be thinner than it really is, and is more apprehensive of danger, so do the trout in



this preternaturally clear water see evil even where none exists. They have the same feeling of insecurity as a sailor would have in a ship with a glass bottom, or a nymph sleeping in a satyr-haunted wood. If a rod be waved over the stream, the fish dart away with the greatest expedition.

We remember one exception to this shyness of the trout during a drought. A big trout had taken up its position in a wide part of the canal which runs through the charming vale of Llangollen. Its weight was over four pounds, and it was regularly besieged by anglers, who tried for it with all sorts of bait; but it took no notice of them, and went on feeding and swimming about in a circumscribed spot without evincing the slightest fear of its many visitors. A friend of ours, yclept Jones, was determined to catch this trout, and after many failures he grew desperate, and resolved to fish for it through the night, as a last chance of catching it off its guard. The sun went down and the dark came on; and minnow, worm, and fly had been tried in vain. The night was a dark one, and Jones mounted a huge white moth, and sent it to where he imagined the fish to be, but he found that he had got his line fast in the branches of the bushes that grew on the opposite side of the canal. He tugged and pulled, but he could not loosen it. He did not wish to break his line, and he fancied he could see his white moth dangling a short distance above the water. He sat down on the



brink to consider, and lit his pipe. It was very warm and still, and he fell into a doze, in a very insecure position. His pipe fell into the water and went out with a fizz, without arousing him; then he heard a loud splash, and no wonder, for he had fallen into the water. He scrambled out again, dripping wet, and missed his rod, which had lain across his knees. As he was wet through, he waded through the canal to unfasten his line, but to his astonishment he found that had gone too. Then he heard a sound some distance off which he well knew. It was the sound of the line being rapidly run off a check reel. Running along the bank, he was able to distinguish his rod moving along the water at a good pace. He dashed in and seized it, and after a long and arduous fight he succeeded in landing the big trout, which had sprung up at his fly as it dangled over the water.

Nor is it on running streams alone that the drought has such an effect. The lakes and pools lower, and their muddy margins, emit unhealthy vapours. The tench and the carp nose about the surface of the water, gasping with their leathery mouths. The pike hangs motionless, though you work your gudgeon to his very nose; the perch swim in scornful circles round your worm; and the little roach jump and play around your float. Only the leaves of the water-lilies and the arrow-heads look cool and green, and the water rises in a



ledge around the edge of each, as if wishful, yet afraid, to overflow it.

But this is all about drought, not rain. True, but we describe the subject of our paper by antithesis. But do you wish for rain? then, see, the haze is lifting from the weather-gleam, the distant woods assume a shape, the hills stand out bold and clear, sound travels far, the flies are doubly annoying, they seem to sting where they alight upon your flesh. The gnats throng close to the earth, and the swallows follow them; the dust eddies in the roads, and the birds shake themselves and twitter in the bushes. The clouds gather,—a silence falls over all. Pat comes the first drop, and then down it comes, the blessed rain. The leaves of the trees expand and shake under its downpour, the branches sway and bend under the beating drops, and there is a sound through the woods as of a mighty wind.

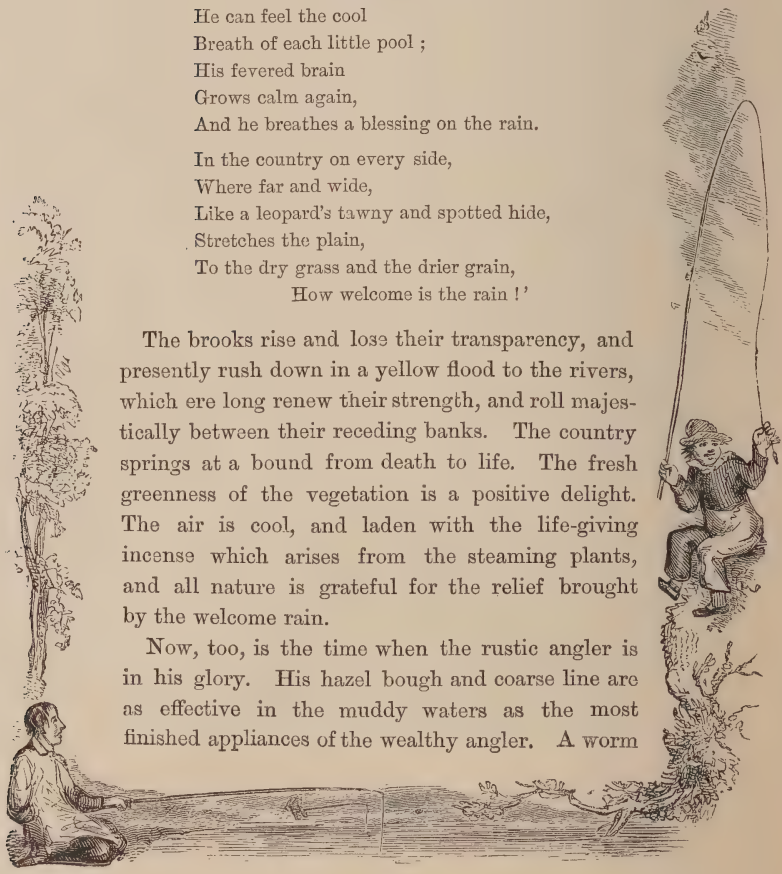
"How beautiful is the rain,
After the dust and heat;
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs;
How it gushes and struggles out,
From the throat of the overflowing spout!
Across the window-pane
It pours and pours,

And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter pours
The rain, the welcome rain !

The sick man from his chamber
Looks at the twisted brooks ;
He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool ;
His fevered brain
Grows calm again,
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

In the country on every side,
Where far and wide,
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,
Stretches the plain,
To the dry grass and the drier grain,
How welcome is the rain !'



The brooks rise and lose their transparency, and presently rush down in a yellow flood to the rivers, which ere long renew their strength, and roll majestically between their receding banks. The country springs at a bound from death to life. The fresh greenness of the vegetation is a positive delight. The air is cool, and laden with the life-giving incense which arises from the steaming plants, and all nature is grateful for the relief brought by the welcome rain.

Now, too, is the time when the rustic angler is in his glory. His hazel bough and coarse line are as effective in the muddy waters as the most finished appliances of the wealthy angler. A worm

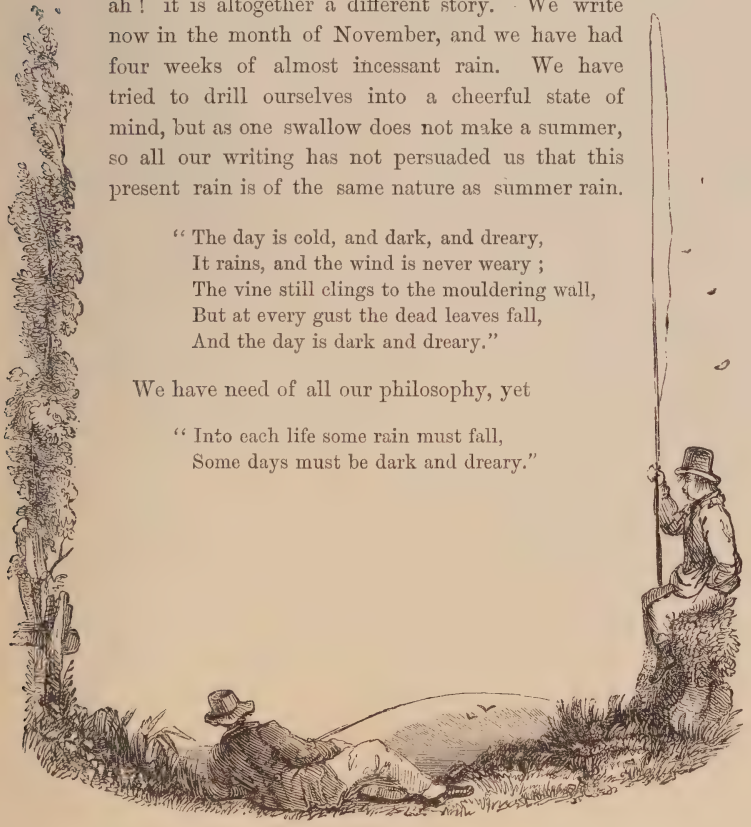
dug out of a manure-heap is as killing as any bait ever devised, and it will go hard with our rustic angler if he catch not a fair dish of trout for his supper. If the stream is unpreserved, every likely hole has its visitor, and many are the trout who have no reason to bless the oncoming of the rain.

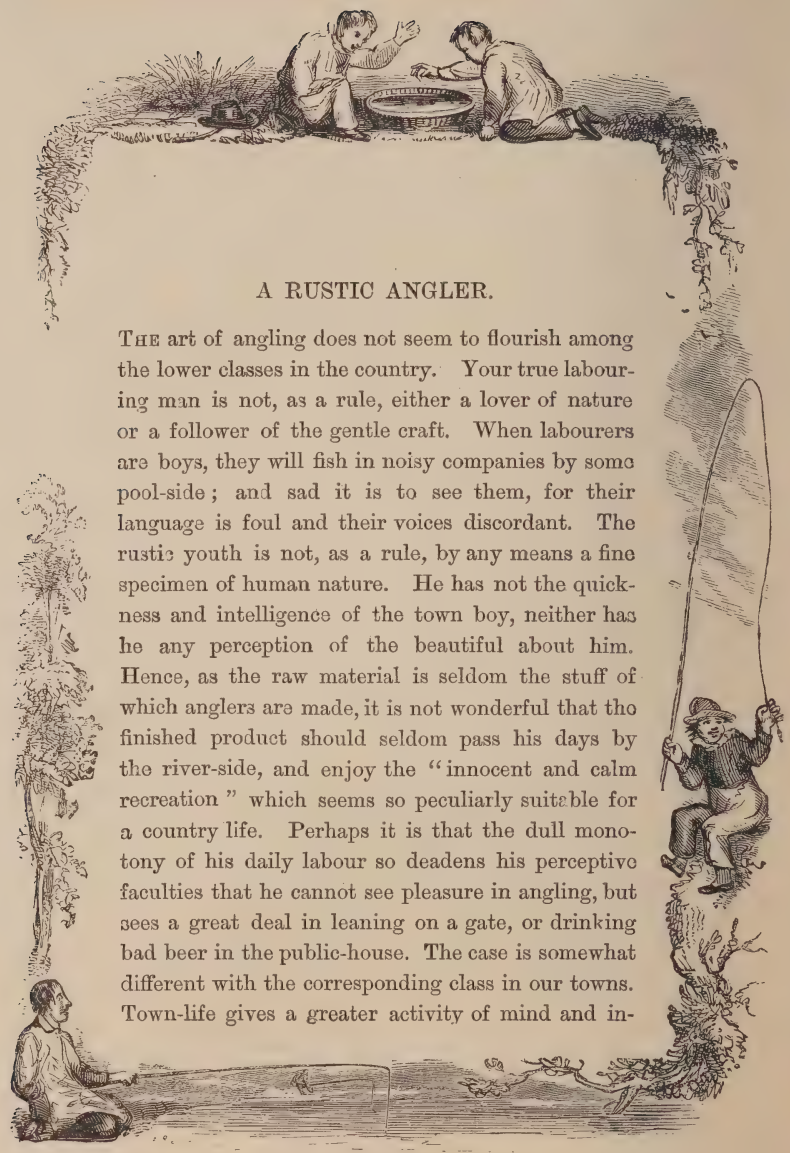
Birds, beasts, fishes, and man welcome the rain in summer, but in the colder months of the year, ah! it is altogether a different story. We write now in the month of November, and we have had four weeks of almost incessant rain. We have tried to drill ourselves into a cheerful state of mind, but as one swallow does not make a summer, so all our writing has not persuaded us that this present rain is of the same nature as summer rain.

> "The day is cold, and dark, and dreary,
> It rains, and the wind is never weary;
> The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
> But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
> And the day is dark and dreary."

We have need of all our philosophy, yet

> "Into each life some rain must fall,
> Some days must be dark and dreary."





A RUSTIC ANGLER.

The art of angling does not seem to flourish among the lower classes in the country. Your true labouring man is not, as a rule, either a lover of nature or a follower of the gentle craft. When labourers are boys, they will fish in noisy companies by some pool-side; and sad it is to see them, for their language is foul and their voices discordant. The rustic youth is not, as a rule, by any means a fine specimen of human nature. He has not the quickness and intelligence of the town boy, neither has he any perception of the beautiful about him. Hence, as the raw material is seldom the stuff of which anglers are made, it is not wonderful that the finished product should seldom pass his days by the river-side, and enjoy the "innocent and calm recreation" which seems so peculiarly suitable for a country life. Perhaps it is that the dull monotony of his daily labour so deadens his perceptive faculties that he cannot see pleasure in angling, but sees a great deal in leaning on a gate, or drinking bad beer in the public-house. The case is somewhat different with the corresponding class in our towns. Town-life gives a greater activity of mind and in-





telligence of purpose; and there is, by the law of contrast, a greater stimulus to seek fresh air and freedom in country rambles and fishing excursions.

When the rustic is an angler, however, he is generally a character well worth knowing. He has a store of practical wisdom, is full of old sayings, quaint and pregnant with meaning; is weatherwise, and knows something of birds and beasts; perhaps has studied botany, especially as connected with the art of healing; and, finally, has a simple, quiet way with him, which is very attractive.

It is easy to sketch his picture.

A thunder-cloud is creeping over the small village that nestles, red-roofed and picturesque, in a typical English valley, blotting out the bright blue sky, and shading the farmyard, so that the frightened fowls run under the hayricks to be out of danger.

The village street is deserted, save for two dogs standing panting at opposite doorways. Look in at one of the windows, in which are a few articles that betoken that there resides the village cobbler. By the open window the cobbler sits, with his last upon his knee, and hammering away as if he thought of nothing but business in the world. He is a man of middle height, thin and bent, not with any great age, for he is only fifty, but through the nature of his calling. His hair is grey, and somewhat straggling and curly. As he hammers away, his brow is bent and his look troubled, as if the fate

of a great speculation hung in the balance. But he is simply thinking whether he can get the boots done by the evening, and if, when they are finished and taken home to the old dame at the post-office, he might ask for payment for them then; for he is short of cash at present, and his good wife has been reminding him of it. He has been dunned for a sum of 3*s*. 10½*d*., and threatened with a County Court summons by a short-tempered tradesman, and it is not convenient just at this time to pay it. Business has been very slack—country boots and shoes don't wear out in the summer; and if they did, they don't let in the wet and cold, simply because there is no wet and cold to let in, and children at least can go barefooted. Then, if he asks his present customer for immediate payment, he would lose her custom, for she would consider that her credit was doubted. True, the cobbler could find a friend to lend him the money, but then he has a soul above borrowing, and is a proud man; and so it is that he is distressed in mind, while the thunder-cloud is blotting out the sunshine.

The shadow crosses his window-pane, and the large drops patter on the dusty road. The cobbler looks suddenly up from his work, and as he sees the increasing downpour, the troubled expression vanishes from off his face, and a cheery, kindly smile illumines it.

"Ha! ha! I said so last night. I saw the look of the sky!" he exclaims, rubbing his hands with

satisfaction. "After this the fish will bite. There has been a drought for the last three weeks, and not a fish could I catch, but after this I will have some fine sport."

He goes to the door and stands, with his legs wide apart and his hands in his pockets, surveying with increasing delight the leaden sky and the wide road, which is now covered with rushing streams of water. He is neglecting his work, and he knows it, yet for the life of him he cannot help it. If his wife saw him, she would scold him well for his idleness, for she is a thrifty soul, and has little sympathy with her husband's recreation. He has no fear of her now, for the flashing lightning and the crashing thunder have driven her to the darkest corner of the kitchen, where she sits with her apron over her head, trembling mightily.

While her husband thinks of the angling to come, he muses also on the angling that is past. Clearly enough, though with a tender halo about them, the scenes of his boyhood come before him. His father was a labourer, struggling hard to keep his large family upon nine shillings a week. As a boy he was more delicate and weakly than his companions, but then he enjoyed himself more, because, while they cared nothing for the country, and longed to be in a distant town, he loved the country for its own sake, and felt a pleasure he was unable to analyse in the contact and companionship of the trees and the birds and the beasts. A canal ran

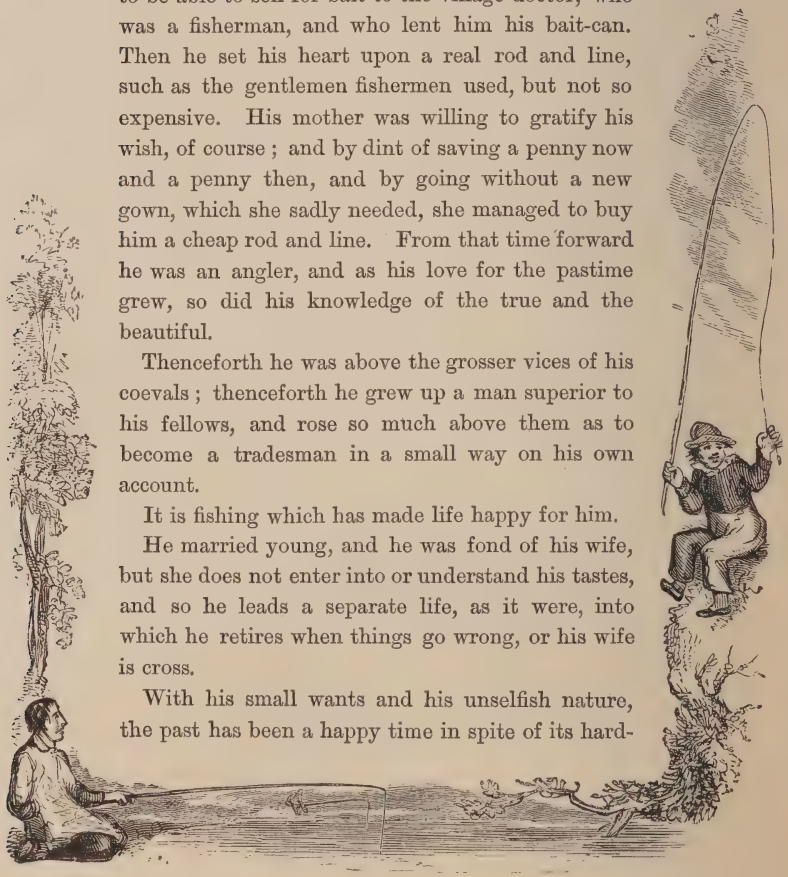
near where he lived, and at a very early age he angled in it, with a hazel-stick for a rod, and a crooked pin for a hook, catching occasionally a gudgeon, a small roach, or a ruffe, and plenty of minnows, which he was sometimes fortunate enough to be able to sell for bait to the village doctor, who was a fisherman, and who lent him his bait-can. Then he set his heart upon a real rod and line, such as the gentlemen fishermen used, but not so expensive. His mother was willing to gratify his wish, of course; and by dint of saving a penny now and a penny then, and by going without a new gown, which she sadly needed, she managed to buy him a cheap rod and line. From that time forward he was an angler, and as his love for the pastime grew, so did his knowledge of the true and the beautiful.

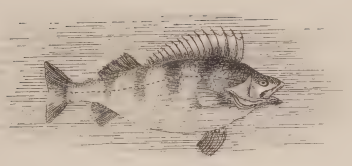
Thenceforth he was above the grosser vices of his coevals; thenceforth he grew up a man superior to his fellows, and rose so much above them as to become a tradesman in a small way on his own account.

It is fishing which has made life happy for him.

He married young, and he was fond of his wife, but she does not enter into or understand his tastes, and so he leads a separate life, as it were, into which he retires when things go wrong, or his wife is cross.

With his small wants and his unselfish nature, the past has been a happy time in spite of its hard-







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ships and struggles ; and as he thinks of it lovingly and half regretfully, the rain ceases, the clouds part, and show a more brilliant blue in their rifts than there was before. The cobbler seizes his rod from the corner, and a bag of worms from a nail in the back kitchen, and, paying a deaf ear to the remonstrances of his wife, he sallies forth to his favourite spot ; and there behold him, as he sits on a fallen log, watching his float twirl in the golden eddies. The spot he has chosen is a good one, and is also prettily situated. The river is a navigable one, and its water is dammed up at intervals by means of locks. Just below one of these the fisherman sits. Above the lock the river flows wide and deep, and between banks heavily fringed with willows, which are green or silvery as the breeze shakes the upper or the under side of the long narrow leaves into view. Their branches trail in the water, which is tinged yellow with the rain.

The river narrows suddenly to the lock, which is an old massive structure, black and moss-stained. Below the lock is a deep pool, and it is on the bank of this that the rustic fisherman takes his seat, on the yellow-ringed stump of a sawn tree, close under the lower gate of the lock. Through the crevices of the gate the water spouts in jets, which, near the top, are bright as mother-of-pearl, flashing in the sun, and lower down are tinged with gold, which shines in strong contrast to the jet of the dripping timber.



From a subaqueous sluice the water pours and bubbles in its haste to join the eddies which whirl about the lower pool, widening and circling more slowly as the distance increases from the floodgate.

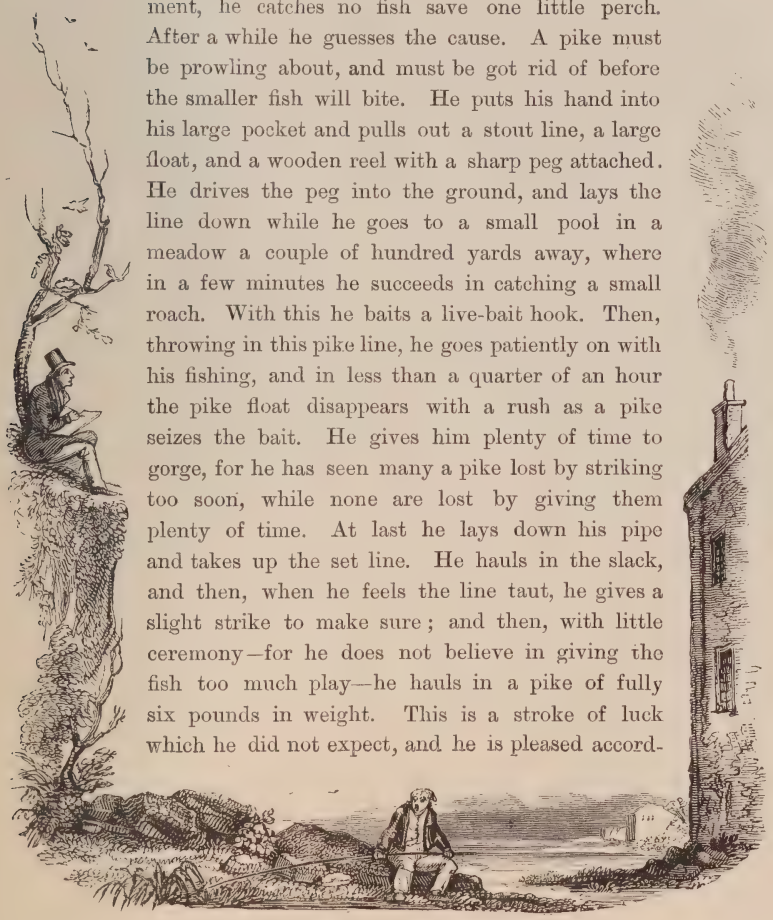
Behind the angler rises a sloping sward of green, broken only by the soft grey trunks of numerous beech trees, until it reaches the oak-crowned ridge of the hill. In the autumn this beech slope presents a wonderful maze of colours. The bright yellow and scarlet of the dying foliage above, and the more sober red and brown of the beech-mast on the ground, burn and glow like a stormy sunset. It is no less beautiful now. The massive foliage of the trees is fresh and green after the rain. Every leaf holds a raindrop, and every raindrop holds a morsel of light. The sun brightens the whole mass, so that the myriad diamond and emerald sparkles are toned down by quantity into a gleamy and quivering lustre.

The river rushes on through the fair English landscape, by bowery woods and coppiced hills, by nestling villages and undulating parks; but nowhere does it pass a happier or more contented man than the cobbler, who sits watching his float as it is carried this way and that way by the conflicting streams.

It is almost needless to say that his bait is a worm. Rustic anglers rarely use any other. His rod is a home-made one, for he cannot afford to

buy one equal to what he is now able to make. The bottom piece is of ash, the second joint is of hazel, and the top is made of a piece of lance-wood, which once formed part of a gig-shaft.

He sits and fishes patiently, but, to his astonishment, he catches no fish save one little perch. After a while he guesses the cause. A pike must be prowling about, and must be got rid of before the smaller fish will bite. He puts his hand into his large pocket and pulls out a stout line, a large float, and a wooden reel with a sharp peg attached. He drives the peg into the ground, and lays the line down while he goes to a small pool in a meadow a couple of hundred yards away, where in a few minutes he succeeds in catching a small roach. With this he baits a live-bait hook. Then, throwing in this pike line, he goes patiently on with his fishing, and in less than a quarter of an hour the pike float disappears with a rush as a pike seizes the bait. He gives him plenty of time to gorge, for he has seen many a pike lost by striking too soon, while none are lost by giving them plenty of time. At last he lays down his pipe and takes up the set line. He hauls in the slack, and then, when he feels the line taut, he gives a slight strike to make sure; and then, with little ceremony—for he does not believe in giving the fish too much play—he hauls in a pike of fully six pounds in weight. This is a stroke of luck which he did not expect, and he is pleased accord-



ingly. Now that the tyrant of a pike is removed, the other fish begin to bite well. Every now and then the float gives a sharp dash with the bite of a perch, wriggles away with the slow bite of an eel, or slides away under the seductive influence of a chub or roach. If, in any interval between the bites, his mind is troubled with the thought of his present monetary embarrassments, the cloud is dissipated by the next movement of his float. Meanwhile, his good wife, when she discovers where he has gone, and that his work is unfinished, is growling and scolding at her husband in his absence. But as evening approaches she remembers that he left without his dinner, so she despatches the youngest of their children, a flaxen-haired, blue-eyed little thing, and her father's especial favourite, to him with bread and cheese and a bottle of beer.

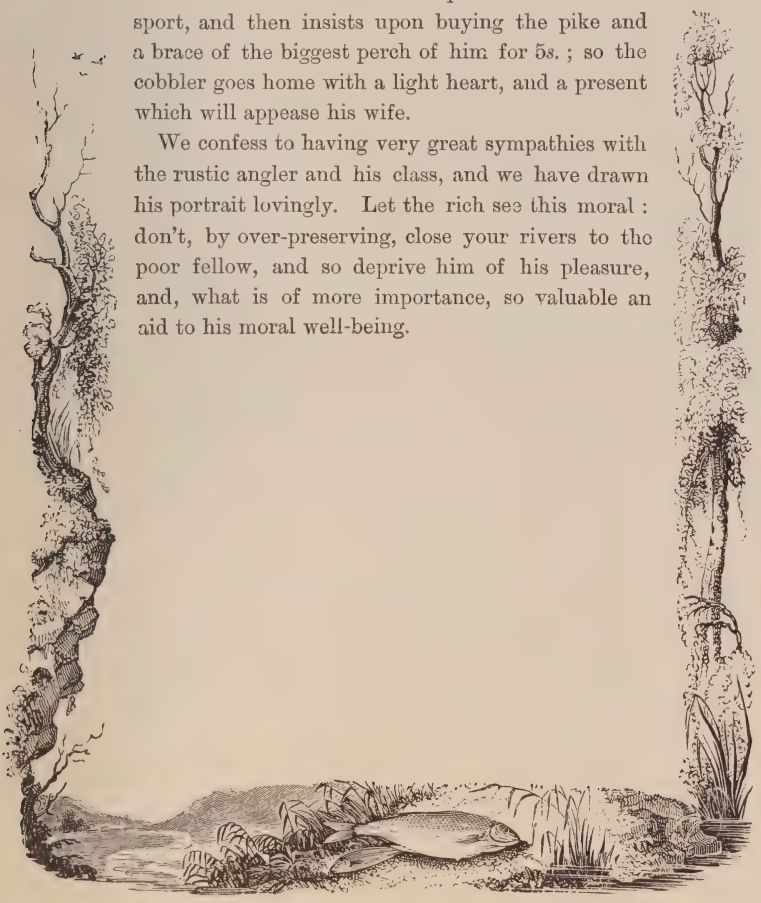
This adds to the angler's happiness, and with his child by his side and a goodly pile of fish at his feet, "he cares for nobody, no, not he."

The long evening draws on towards dusk. The sun goes down, and the air is so clear that the blue of the western sky is scarce hidden by the pale pink of the sunset flush. The air is full of a sleepy sound; the hum of insects—of myriads of tiny wings vibrating in golden clouds; the wood-pigeons in the oak copse; the cattle lowing in the meadows; the splash and gurgle of the river; and the rustling of the leaves in the wind which rose at sunset.



As he loiters slowly homeward through the glamour of the twilight he meets the clergyman of the parish, a man who is himself an angler, and is fond of doing a good deed in a quiet way. He asks the cobbler a few questions about his sport, and then insists upon buying the pike and a brace of the biggest perch of him for 5*s.* ; so the cobbler goes home with a light heart, and a present which will appease his wife.

We confess to having very great sympathies with the rustic angler and his class, and we have drawn his portrait lovingly. Let the rich see this moral : don't, by over-preserving, close your rivers to the poor fellow, and so deprive him of his pleasure, and, what is of more importance, so valuable an aid to his moral well-being.



A MONSTER PIKE.

VERY few anglers are "all round" men—*i.e.*, devote themselves to the pursuit of all branches of angling alike. Most men cherish a liking for some particular branch of their art until it grows into a hobby. Thus we have the different classes of fly-fishers, bottom-fishers, salmon-fishers and trout-fishers, pike-fishers and roach-fishers, barbel-fishers and gudgeon-fishers; and each class stands by its favourite pursuit, and declares it to be the only true kind of angling. I can turn my hand to all these branches on occasion, and enjoy them all, but above all do I like pike-fishing. That is my hobby, and in that do I glory. I would rather have one day's pike-fishing than have a dozen days of any other kind of fishing. The pike is such a savage brute,—he rushes at your bait with such vigour and ferocity, his jaws close so firmly upon the fish which has lured him, he shakes his head so fiercely, and fights to the death with such tenacity and pluck, that one feels great pride in subduing him. The captive trout or salmon gives more dashing play, no doubt; but then these seem to be the struggles of mad terror, and a

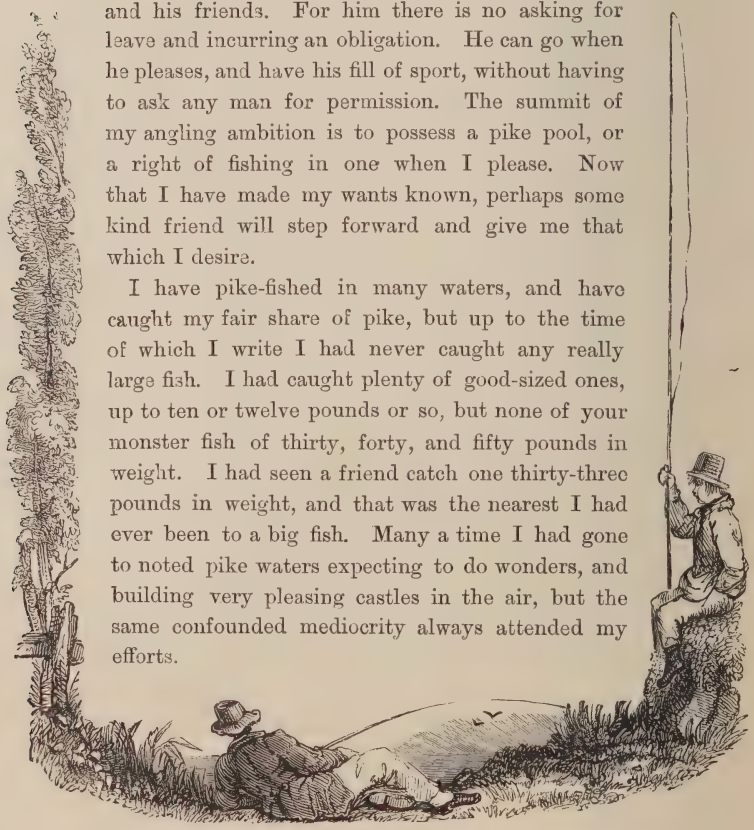
frantic desire to escape. The pike, on the other hand, shows no terror; he fights you as an enemy would, with a great pleasure in the fight; and if he succeeds in breaking away from you, he will even dash at your bait again, although his mouth may be lacerated by the former struggle. When he dies, he dies not in pitiful terror, but in splendid rage. One experiences no uncomfortable feelings of compassion, but rather a sense of well-won triumph. Then there are so many ways of fishing for him. You may troll with a dead-gorge bait in weedy pools beset with sunken roots and branches; and then you have a delicious feeling of suspense for ten minutes or so while he gorges the bait. You may spin for him, your bait sliding over masses of tangled weed, and from out the lanes of clear water you will see his swift and splendid rush that sends your heart leaping into your mouth with excitement; you may fly-fish for him with a huge fly, or trail a spoon-bait after your boat as you row round the mere during an autumn gale; and you may sit at ease in your punt, on a warm August day, and watch your large float bob with the movement of your live-bait, and then dive down suddenly with the "run" of a pike. In all and each of these ways you will find much enjoyment and good sport.

The worst of it is that good pike-waters are very hard of access nowadays. As a general rule they are strictly preserved, and where they are not

so are overfished and poached, so that they are scarcely worth a visit. Very often the best sport is to be had in deep pools in trout rivers, where the pike has made his home unnoticed, and where nobody thinks of fishing for him.

In spite of a commandment against envying one's neighbour's possessions, I always envy the man who has a good pike pool or river *all to himself* and his friends. For him there is no asking for leave and incurring an obligation. He can go when he pleases, and have his fill of sport, without having to ask any man for permission. The summit of my angling ambition is to possess a pike pool, or a right of fishing in one when I please. Now that I have made my wants known, perhaps some kind friend will step forward and give me that which I desire.

I have pike-fished in many waters, and have caught my fair share of pike, but up to the time of which I write I had never caught any really large fish. I had caught plenty of good-sized ones, up to ten or twelve pounds or so, but none of your monster fish of thirty, forty, and fifty pounds in weight. I had seen a friend catch one thirty-three pounds in weight, and that was the nearest I had ever been to a big fish. Many a time I had gone to noted pike waters expecting to do wonders, and building very pleasing castles in the air, but the same confounded mediocrity always attended my efforts.



I was on a visit some little time ago in one of the western counties, and in the course of a picnic excursion we came upon a lake embosomed in woods, which at once took my fancy as the very *beau idéal* of a pike-pool. It was surrounded with reeds and rushes. Its shores curved in many a quiet bay margined with lilies, where the coot and the water-hen swam with a tameness and sense of security which showed that they were not often disturbed. A light breeze was rippling the pool, and every now and then a rush of small fish out of the pool showed where the pike were chasing them. The remembrance of that pool quite haunted me for a long time to come, and the desire to fish in it was fanned by the tales which our host told me of the wondrously large pike which were to be caught there. It was strictly preserved, and very seldom fished. Some time afterwards I accidentally made the acquaintance of its owner. We became good friends—for the possession of this pike-pool made him seem a very pleasant fellow in my eyes. I cunningly led him up to the subject of fishing, and to his pike-pool; and the end of it was that he invited me to spend a short time with him at his house, and to help to kill some of its large pike; for he was an angler, only his tastes ran upon salmon-fishing, and nothing pleased him better than going to Norway.

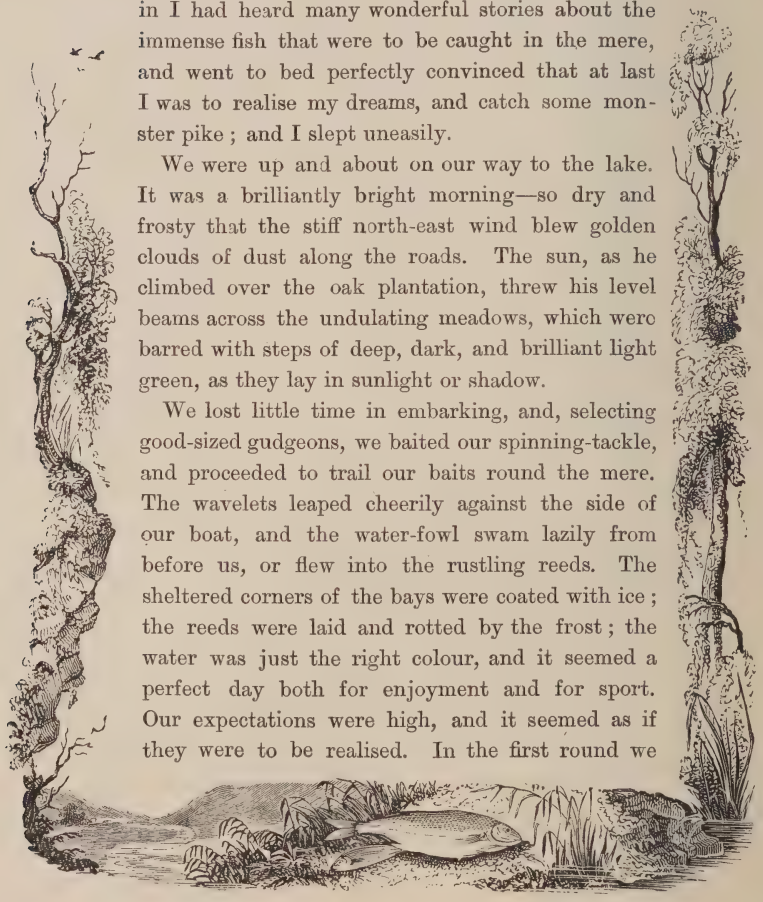
A clear dry frosty night in January saw me with my legs under my friend's mahogany. We were



to fish the mere on the morrow, and everything was prepared for our sport. The gamekeeper had obtained a quantity of gudgeon from a neighbouring river, and they had been kept fresh and lively in a tank sunk in the mere. Ere the coffee came in I had heard many wonderful stories about the immense fish that were to be caught in the mere, and went to bed perfectly convinced that at last I was to realise my dreams, and catch some monster pike; and I slept uneasily.

We were up and about on our way to the lake. It was a brilliantly bright morning—so dry and frosty that the stiff north-east wind blew golden clouds of dust along the roads. The sun, as he climbed over the oak plantation, threw his level beams across the undulating meadows, which were barred with steps of deep, dark, and brilliant light green, as they lay in sunlight or shadow.

We lost little time in embarking, and, selecting good-sized gudgeons, we baited our spinning-tackle, and proceeded to trail our baits round the mere. The wavelets leaped cheerily against the side of our boat, and the water-fowl swam lazily from before us, or flew into the rustling reeds. The sheltered corners of the bays were coated with ice; the reeds were laid and rotted by the frost; the water was just the right colour, and it seemed a perfect day both for enjoyment and for sport. Our expectations were high, and it seemed as if they were to be realised. In the first round we



caught six pike, but what rather astonished me was that they were all under five pounds in weight. When we were halfway round a second time, just off the mouth of a weedy bay, my rod gave a great lunge, and was nearly torn out of my hand. I struck, and it was evident that I was fast in mighty fish.

"Keep him away from the weeds," exclaimed my companion; "you have caught a whopper, and no mistake."

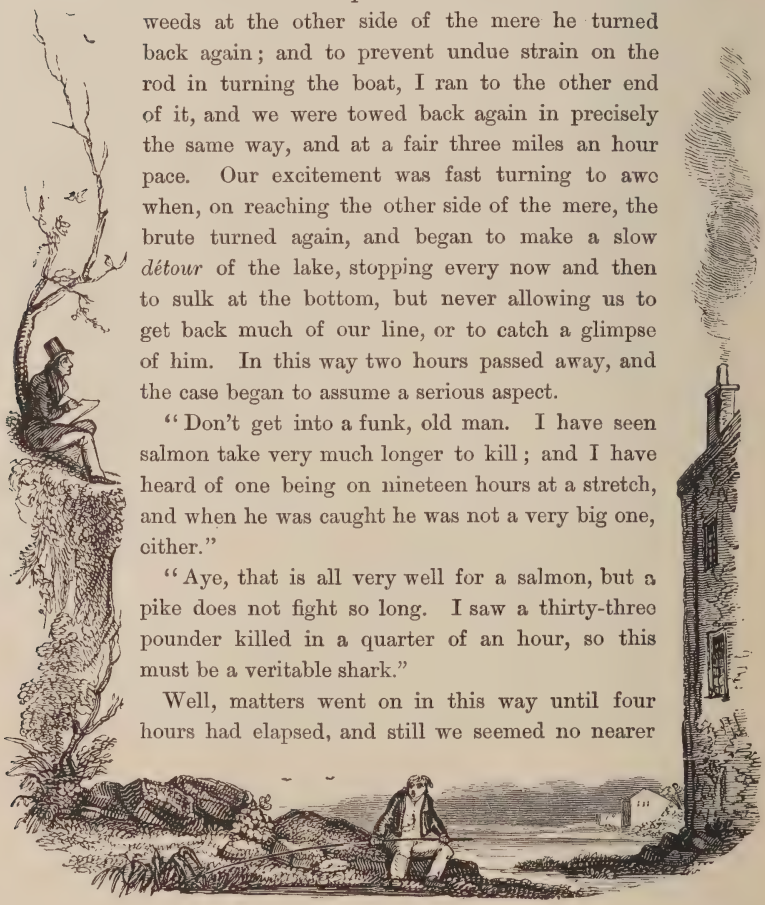
There was no need for his caution to keep the fish away from the weeds. The pike made straight for the centre of the mere, running out my line at a fearful rate. I let go the line grudgingly, for I expected him to make a dash back for the weeds, when my line would be doubled-up and I should lose my fish. But the pike had no such intention. He went straight ahead, without pausing in his steady rush, until my line, which was eighty yards long, was nearly all out. I gave him the butt, and held on until I thought my rod would have broken, in the hope of turning him; but he still went on, and then, as my rod was stanch and my line was strong, our boat began to move after the pike.

"By Jove! this is wonderful," said my friend. "You have hooked a leviathan. Play him steadily and skilfully, and don't get excited."

Now that was very good advice if it could be carried out; but as the speaker was already white



and trembling with excitement, and I was, if anything, worse, his advice was not of much use. Well, I stood in the bows of the boat, and the monster towed us with increasing swiftness right across the lake, which was about a quarter of a mile broad at this part. When we came to the weeds at the other side of the mere he turned back again; and to prevent undue strain on the rod in turning the boat, I ran to the other end of it, and we were towed back again in precisely the same way, and at a fair three miles an hour pace. Our excitement was fast turning to awe when, on reaching the other side of the mere, the brute turned again, and began to make a slow *détour* of the lake, stopping every now and then to sulk at the bottom, but never allowing us to get back much of our line, or to catch a glimpse of him. In this way two hours passed away, and the case began to assume a serious aspect.



"Don't get into a funk, old man. I have seen salmon take very much longer to kill; and I have heard of one being on nineteen hours at a stretch, and when he was caught he was not a very big one, either."

"Aye, that is all very well for a salmon, but a pike does not fight so long. I saw a thirty-three pounder killed in a quarter of an hour, so this must be a veritable shark."

Well, matters went on in this way until four hours had elapsed, and still we seemed no nearer

to the end. Then seventy yards away there was a huge "boil" at the top of the water, and the strain on the rod slackened.

"Hurrah! there he is. He is beginning to give in. It will only be a short time now."

My friend was right. Little by little I wound in my line, and nearer and nearer the monster came. At last we could distinctly see him rushing and wallowing about with widely-distended mouth, in the clear water. In length he was about five feet, and his weight, it is clear, must have been eighty pounds. What a proud man I felt at that moment! All my hopes were on the point of being realised. I drew him slowly and carefully in, and my friend struck the gaff into him, and then our united efforts——

"Hallo! what's that knocking for?"

"Here's your hot water, sir, and breakfast will be ready in half an hour."

"Oh, murder! where is the big pike?" I exclaimed, looking about. Alas! it was only a dream.

I had very good sport that day and the following, but *not a fish was over ten pounds in weight,* and my big pike has yet to be caught.



ON SOME ODD WAYS OF FISHING.

The maxim that one half the world does not know how the other half lives, may, with but slight variation, be applied to the world of sportsmen. The "sportsman" is not of any particular class. The highest in the land and the lowest may rub shoulders in the broad field of sport. This is peculiarly true as regards the gentle art. Wandering by the side of an unpreserved stream, you may see my lord casting a fly over this shallow, and, twenty yards farther down, Tinker Ben seated by the side of a chub-hole watching his float circling round in the eddy; and as the noble passes the boor an honest angler's greeting may be exchanged, and a light for the latter's pipe asked for and given. It may be taken as a general rule that between anglers who pursue their sport by fair means there is a levelling freemasonry of the craft which is as pleasant as it is right.

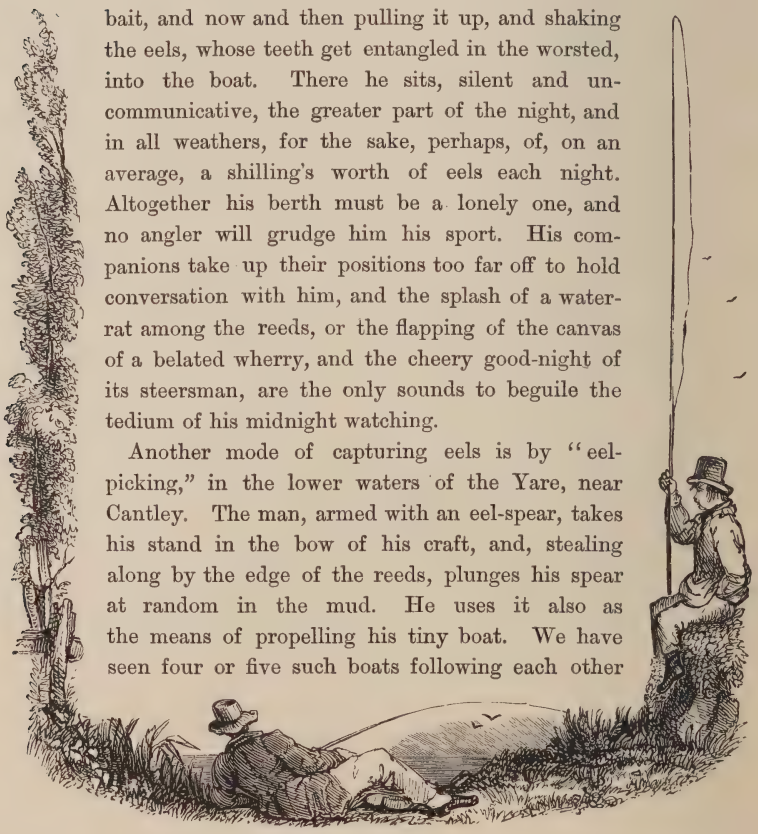
Between the fair fisherman and the poacher there is, however, a broad line of demarcation—a line which bars the interchange of even the commonest civilities on the mutual ground of pursuing the same object. The fair fisherman hates the man who

captures the finny tribe by unfair or illegal means as strongly as a fox-hunter hates a fox-killer, or a strict Sabbatarian hates a sinner who enjoys a Sunday afternoon's walk and the glimpses of nature it may afford him. There is also a line drawn between the man who fishes for amusement alone and him who fishes for profit. The division in the latter instance may not be so broad as in the former, but nevertheless it is wide enough to distinctly separate the two classes. Now we think the fair and amateur angler is, in a great many nstances, unaware of the shifts and dodges adopted by the poacher and pot-hunter to fill their pockets, and of the consequent hindrance to his own sport. Therefore, by way of warning, of information, and possible amusement, we have noted down a few of the instances which have come under our own observation. And as we do not expect any poacher to read this book, our revelations will do no harm by way of suggestion.

Let any one take a boat and row down the sluggish Yare from the commission-haunted old city of Norwich, as the shades of evening are darkening the river, and he will see several uncouth, rough-looking boats being slowly impelled down-stream by rougher-looking men. He will notice that they have short, stout rods and long poles in their boats; and if he watches them, he will presently see them take up their stations by the margin of some reed-bed, or in a quiet bay of

the river. Driving the poles in the mud at the stems and sterns of their boats, the men make them fast, and taking their seats proceed to "bob" for eels. A quantity of earthworms are strung on worsted, and, after being weighted, are suspended by a stout line from a short, thick rod. The solitary fisherman holds a rod in each hand, on either side of the boat, just feeling the bottom with the bait, and now and then pulling it up, and shaking the eels, whose teeth get entangled in the worsted, into the boat. There he sits, silent and uncommunicative, the greater part of the night, and in all weathers, for the sake, perhaps, of, on an average, a shilling's worth of eels each night. Altogether his berth must be a lonely one, and no angler will grudge him his sport. His companions take up their positions too far off to hold conversation with him, and the splash of a water-rat among the reeds, or the flapping of the canvas of a belated wherry, and the cheery good-night of its steersman, are the only sounds to beguile the tedium of his midnight watching.

Another mode of capturing eels is by "eel-picking," in the lower waters of the Yare, near Cantley. The man, armed with an eel-spear, takes his stand in the bow of his craft, and, stealing along by the edge of the reeds, plunges his spear at random in the mud. He uses it also as the means of propelling his tiny boat. We have seen four or five such boats following each other



along the side of the river in a queer-looking procession.

Those centres of interest to the angler, the Norfolk broads, are, alas! the strongholds of poaching. Norfolk anglers plead their great expanse of water as an excuse for "liggering," or setting trimmers, to an enormous extent. Taking Norfolk anglers as a class, if they can "ligger" they will. The amount of destruction thus occasioned is something wonderful. The only time we ever yielded to the temptation of going with a friend "liggering" we are thankful to say we caught nothing, and we are not in a hurry to repeat the experiment. Yarrell gives an account of four days' "sport" (?) at Heigham Sounds and Horsea, where, in 1834, in the month of March, when the pike breed, his informants caught in that space of time 256 pike, weighing altogether 1135 pounds. What wonder that it is now difficult to get really good sport at these places with rod and line!

One of our favourite fish, the tench, has a bad habit of basking on the surface of some of these broads on hot summer days, in weedy bays, where he deems himself perfectly secure. But the amphibious broadsman paddles quietly up to him, and actually scoops him out with his hand. You may touch the fish's body with your hand, and he will not move; but if you touch his tail, he darts away.

We have seen a somewhat similar thing in shallow



pools in Shropshire. When the big carp come to the side to spawn, their bodies are half out of the water, and they may be approached and shovelled out with a spade.

In the reeds adjoining the carp-pool we once found a murderous instrument which was used by a gang of sawyers at work in the adjacent wood for destroying the basking carp. It consisted of a large, flat piece of wood, in which were set long nails, like the teeth of a garden rake. This was attached to a long pole, and woe betide the unfortunate carp upon whose back it descended!

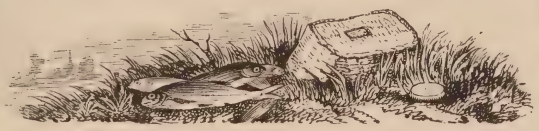
Grouping for trout in the shallow streams is a well-known amusement of country boys; but the dastardly and cruel practice of liming a brook is not now so often resorted to as it used to be. We have seen it done in a mountain brook, when, on account of our extreme youth, we were powerless to prevent it; and a schoolboy notion of honour prevented our peaching. A shovelful of quicklime is taken up the brook to some shallow ford, and then thrown into the water and triturated, so that the stream carries it in a milk-white stream downwards. In a short time the poachers follow, and pick up the trout, which are floating dead on the surface, or swimming in circles on the top of the water, with scorched and blinded eyeballs. The lime penetrates into every crevice of the stream-bed; and if it does not kill every trout within its range, it cruelly tortures all. We still

remember the sickening sense of shame that crept over us as, unwilling participators in the outrage, we crept over the mossy ground; when the noise made by every water-ouzel that took wing, and every sheep that leaped down the hillside, seemed to herald the approach of a keeper, with the awful penalties of the law in his train.

Diverting the course of a brook, and emptying the pools of their water, and afterwards of their fish, is a long operation, and therefore not so frequently resorted to; but that poaching instrument called the two-pole net we have known to clear many a nice little pool in a stream of its spotted denizens.

In Cardiganshire it is the practice for men to go up the streams armed with a sledge-hammer, with which they strike the big stones in the brook. The concussion stuns the fish, and they are easily picked up afterwards.

Do our readers know what a "cleeching-net" is? It is in effect a magnified landing-net at the end of a long pole, with the lower part of the rim straight. Its use is to "grab" fish from under clumps of weed and overhanging banks. We once had one made for the purpose of catching bait, and a ludicrous accident occurred to a friend of ours who used it. He plunged it in too far from the side, where the water was deeper than he imagined, and the consequence was that he fell forward, his feet still on the bank, and his hands



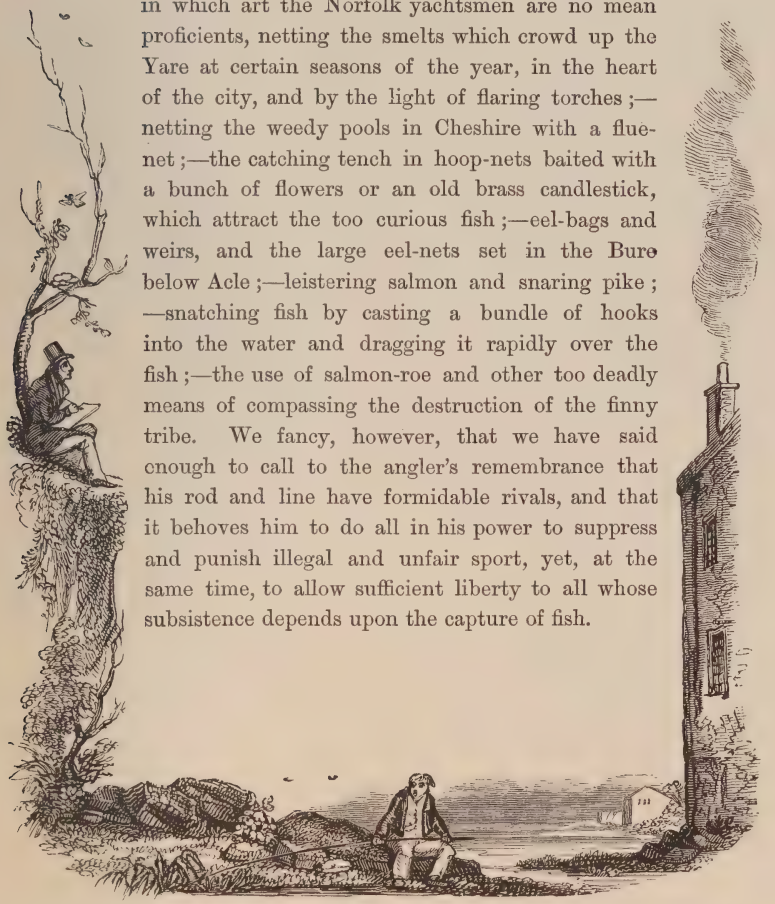
resting on the top of the pole within a foot of the water, into which he gradually subsided, in spite of our efforts to pull him back by the slack of his trousers.

We have seen the cleeching-net used in a very effective manner by bargees on canals. As their vessel is towed along they put the net into the water alongside the bows, and walk back to the stern as the boat moves, so as to keep the net in the same position. The rush of the water, displaced by the passage of the barge, drives a good many fish into the net; and we have even known fair-sized pike to be captured in this way.

Once we were cruising down the Severn, and had moored our canoe under some bushes in a very secluded part of the river, to take our mid-day rest. Presently we saw two men in coracles coming down the river. They stopped just opposite us, and commenced to net the river with a small-meshed net. They payed the net out in a semicircle, and then, beating the water with their paddles, they closed, and completed the circle, and with their coracles side by side hauled their net in. It was a caution to see the fish they had caught. Great chub of five, and one of nine pounds in weight. Roach, pike, and dace—in half an hour they had caught a great number. They looked frightened enough when we shot out from our hiding-place and examined their sport and their net.

Fishing for a dinner through a hole in the ice, will also be deemed sufficiently odd, though it is said that perch will bite well then.

Among other odd, or at least unorthodox, ways of fishing, may be reckoned setting night-lines, in which art the Norfolk yachtsmen are no mean proficients, netting the smelts which crowd up the Yare at certain seasons of the year, in the heart of the city, and by the light of flaring torches;—netting the weedy pools in Cheshire with a flue-net;—the catching tench in hoop-nets baited with a bunch of flowers or an old brass candlestick, which attract the too curious fish;—eel-bags and weirs, and the large eel-nets set in the Bure below Acle;—leistering salmon and snaring pike;—snatching fish by casting a bundle of hooks into the water and dragging it rapidly over the fish;—the use of salmon-roe and other too deadly means of compassing the destruction of the finny tribe. We fancy, however, that we have said enough to call to the angler's remembrance that his rod and line have formidable rivals, and that it behoves him to do all in his power to suppress and punish illegal and unfair sport, yet, at the same time, to allow sufficient liberty to all whose subsistence depends upon the capture of fish.



CARPE DIEM.

As one gets ever such a little older, one gets very much more disinclined to take much trouble, much physical trouble that is, about hobbies which once were ridden to death. A few years ago it was a pleasure to get up at two o'clock in the morning, and have six hours' fishing before it became necessary to get to work at Blackstone and Chitty, and the endless writing of "common forms;" now I prefer keeping within the sheets until breakfast-time, and leaving fishing expeditions for legitimate holidays. So that, as holidays are not very frequent, and often necessarily taken up in other ways, and as fishing stations are distant, and not easily accessible, my hand is in danger of forgetting its cunning in wielding a fishing-rod. I do not so much miss my favourite sport until, in an unfortunate hour, I get hold of a book of angling reminiscences, of which there are plenty, and reading in its pages vivid descriptions of days by the river-side, such as I used to experience myself, my fancy sets to work, and, aided by memory, conjures up such delightful visions that at last I cannot sit still; the room—ay, and the

town—seem to stifle me; and I long for a glorious ramble, rod in hand, as much as I ever did.

Following close upon the perusal of such a book, and the feelings awakened by it, I was pleased beyond measure to find myself possessed of a few days of leisure, and once more in the border-land of Wales. I took care to make the most of my time, and seize the opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with some of those charming spots with which, as an angler and a writer, I had in times past identified myself.



One day I spent in tracing the wanderings of the burn whence many a lusty trout had been transferred to my pannier. Another afternoon I set out for a carp-pool,—not *the* carp-pool *par excellence* of our boyish days, but one nearly as good, where I had caught some six-pounders years ago. I walked to the place—it was two miles and a half away—burdened with three rods and a huge bagful of worms, intent upon slaughter. I neared the field; I crossed the hedge. I stood still and gazed in astonishment. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. *There was no pool there.* I walked round the field, and across the field, which was strewn with clumps of rushes. A peewit had laid four eggs on the very spot, as I calculated, where I had hooked my biggest carp. A small boy hove in sight. I seized him, and asked him where the pool had gone. He answered, "Whoy, mun, it ha' been drained dry these three years." I sat upon

a gate and smoked four cigarettes; then walked home, my rods feeling twice as heavy as when I came that way.

I was to be recompensed, however, for my disappointment by a day at the carp-pool on the hill at Craigyrhiw, Coed-y-gar, or Penycoed, for it goes by all three names, the first being the most proper. By accident I met an old friend from a distance, who, when he heard where I was bound to, offered to accompany me. I was glad of his companionship for more than one reason. He had affected to disbelieve my accounts of the big fish to be caught there, and this was an opportunity of vindicating myself from the charge of exaggeration. He got his rods, and we started, pausing on the way to get a couple of small Melton Mowbray pies for lunch. My friend, whom I shall call A., left the commissariat department to me; and I, having just had a good breakfast, did not contemplate the possibility of becoming very hungry during the day, so considered we should have quite sufficient to recruit ourselves with. Leaving the town, we passed under the beautiful avenue of limes in the churchyard, musical with rooks and sweet with spring fragrance, and so on to Oswald's Well. Under a tree close by, King Oswald fell in battle, and out of the ground afterward sprang water, said to be endowed with healing power. The well is neatly arched over with stone, and has the effigy of King Oswald at the back; but the latter offered



too good a mark for the stones of the grammar-school lads to remain undefaced. Oswaldestree is now corrupted into Oswestry, or more commonly, among the country people, Hogestry, or Osistry. Just above the well is the present battle-ground where affairs of honour among the schoolboys are, or used to be, settled by an appeal to fisticuffs.

Crossing Llanvorda Park, we enter Craigvorda woods, at once the most beautiful and picturesque of the many similar woods on the borders. The ground is mossy underfoot, the trees meet overhead, glossy green ferns pave the noble corridors, which have for pillars straight and sturdy firs and larch, and for a roof the heavy foliage of interwoven sycamore and oak. At intervals the chesnut too lifts its gigantic nosegay of pink and white and yellow flower-spikes; and near it, out of some craggy knoll, the "lady of the forest," the silver birk, bends tenderly over the masses of blue hyacinths below. "The shade is silent and dark and green, and the boughs so thickly are twined across, that little blue sky is seen between;" but there is no lack of blue underfoot, for the hyacinths seemed to have claimed the wood as their own property, and shine like a shimmering sea of blue between the tree stems, quite putting out of countenance with their blaze of colour the modest violet, growing by the side of the runnels leaping downward to join the noisy brook.

We crossed the Morda, a purling trout stream.

out of which you may easily basket a score of trout in the spring; up a lane, the banks of which were crowded so thickly with spring flowers, starwort, and other snow-white flowers, deep-blue germander speedwells, red ragged-robins, and wild geraniums, monkshood, daisies, dandelions, and buttercups, that the green of the leaves and grasses was quite absorbed and lost in the brighter hues; up and up—until our legs began to ache; and at last we came to the crest of the hill, in the hollow a few feet below which lay the tarn, gloomy enough, but weirdly beautiful. The water itself looked green from the prevailing colour of the rushes and flags, and the deep belt of green alders, which grew half in and half out of it all round.

"Look," I said, "there are two herons, a couple of wild-ducks, with their young brood just hatched, twenty or thirty coots and water-hens, and some black leaves sticking up out of the water, which are the things we are after."

"What do you mean?" asked A.

"They are the back fins of carp."

A.'s rods—he had two, as I had—were put together with remarkable quickness. I took it more leisurely, and watched him searching about for a place to cast his line in, with some amusement.

"I say, how are we to get at the water?" he cried.

"Wade." But this he was averse to doing. He found a log of wood, and pushing it out beyond the bushes, where it was very shallow, he took his

stand upon it, in a very wobbly state, with a rod in either hand. I took up a position a short distance from him, and we waited patiently for half an hour without a bite. Suddenly I heard a splash, and, looking round, saw that A. had slipped off his perch, and was halfway up to his knees in water, with a broken rod and a most rueful expression on his face.

"I have lost such a beauty!"

"Serves you right. You can't pitch a big carp out as you could a trout. This is the way—see." I struck at a decided bite, and found that I was fast in a good fish, which, after a lively bit of splashing and dashing about (the water was only knee-deep, yet so muddy that the fish could not see us), I led into a little haven or pond where the inmates of a cottage in the wood came to get their water, and lifted him out with my hands, a tidy fish of three pounds in weight. In about a quarter of an hour A.'s float moved slightly. He was all excitement directly. He had never caught anything larger than a half-pound trout. Some minutes elapsed before another movement took place. "He has left it," said A.

"No, he has not;—don't move; you will get him presently."

Then the float, or quill, gave a couple of dips, then in a few seconds more moved off with increasing rapidity. "Now strike." A. did so, and soon landed a carp of two pounds. From that

time we had steady sport throughout the day. Every quarter of an hour one of us had a bite; and although we missed a good many through striking too soon, our respective heaps of golden-brown fish (very few of the carp there are at all white) grew rapidly in size.

As we were coming back from a small larch tree where we had found a beautifully constructed golden-crested wren's nest, suspended from the under side of a branch, A. suddenly clasped me round the middle, and gave me a very neat back-throw. "Hullo! what's that for?" I exclaimed, considerably astonished as I sat on the ground.

"Your foot was just poised over that beggar," he said, pointing out to a big brown adder, which was gliding away like an animated ash stick.

"Ah, thanks; there are too many of those fellows here."

We had eaten the two pies, and as four o'clock drew near we got mighty hungry again.

"Just hand me over another pie, old fellow. Nature abhors a vacuum," said A.

"I haven't got any more," I answered.

"Not got any more? Oh, dear." After a pause, "I *am* hungry." In a little while longer A. started off saying, "You mind my rod while I am away. I am going foraging for food. I'll try and catch a rabbit, and eat him alive. I've been meditating upon those fish, but I don't like the look of them."

He was gone for about half an hour, during which time I had landed three fish. When he came back he had the countenance of a man who had dined well. He said to me,

"Go as straight as you can through the wood in that direction, and you will come to a cottage where there is plenty of hot tea, a loaf of bread, and some butter awaiting you. I never dined better in all my life, and I forgive you for only bringing two pies."

I obeyed his directions, and the tea certainly was refreshing, although I could not get any sugar with it.

It was time to be going. We counted our fish. I had eleven (my usual number at that pool, by the way), and A. had ten, most from two to three pounds each, but one or two heavier. We selected the best and as many as we could conveniently carry, and gave the rest to some cottagers.

From the shooting-box, which is at the top of the hill, and is, by the way, in a state of dilapidation, we had a most magnificent view, one well worth the walk to see. It was a view which embraced Shropshire, Cheshire, Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire, and Merionethshire. In the vividly green valley below us the little village of Llansilin slumbered, scarcely noticeable were it not for the dark and massy yew-trees in its churchyard.

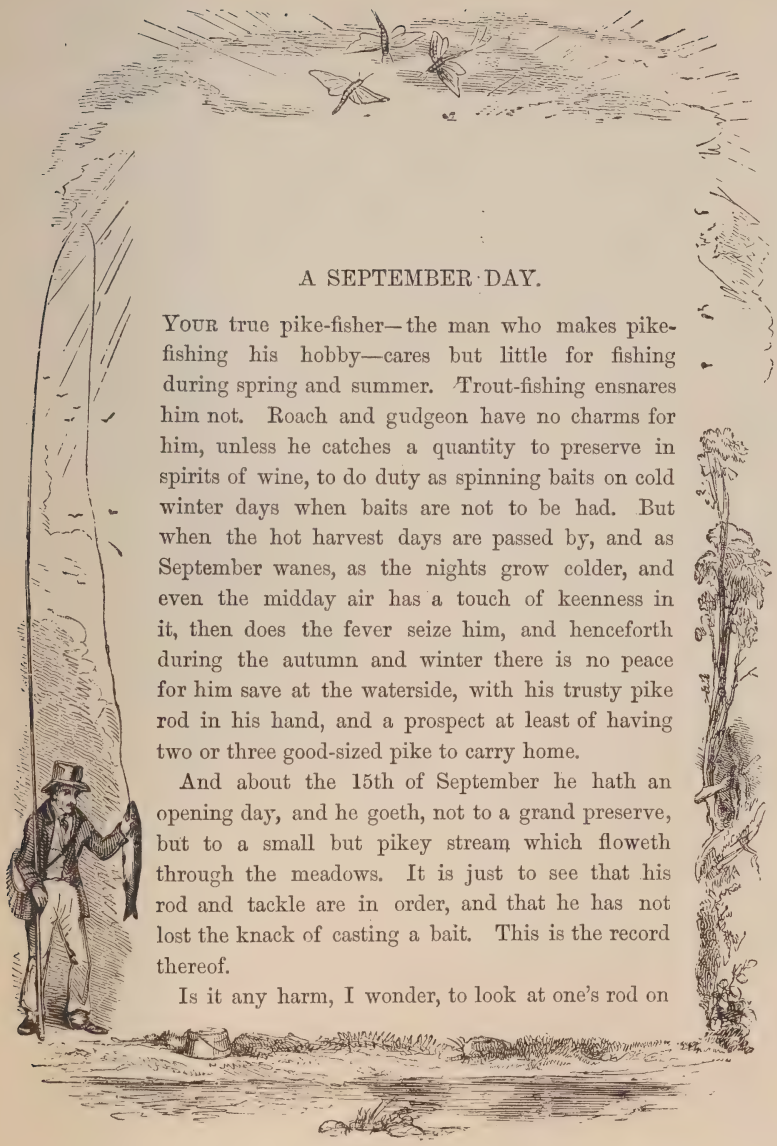
From the rocks farther on we saw a pretty sight. A fox was standing on a stone, and on a sloping

slab beneath her five cubs were sprawling and gambolling about like a lot of Newfoundland puppies. Presently the vixen trotted off a little way and lay down; and while we were watching her, a rabbit popped out of his burrow, and came several yards towards Reynard without seeing her. With one bound fox was upon bunny, and the pair rolled over and over down the hill. The captor then slunk off with her captive,—not to her young ones, but to a quiet hole in the cliff, to have a gorge all by her greedy self.

In a hollow tree in the cliff we found three jackdaws' nests, each with four eggs in; and we were amused at watching a woodpecker tapping away at a tree. The noise produced was like that made by drawing a stick very rapidly over some wooden palings, and quite as loud, or even more like a watchman's rattle worked rather slowly. A curious spectacle was presented in the lane on going home. It was a warm, damp night, and every dozen yards or so a glowworm exhibited its eerie light, and each successive one seemed to shine more whitely and brightly than the last.

The day was done, its pleasure seized, and—no, not gone, for a pleasant memory remains wherewith to delight myself, and perchance please my friends, among whom I would fain number all angling readers.





A SEPTEMBER DAY.

Your true pike-fisher—the man who makes pike-fishing his hobby—cares but little for fishing during spring and summer. Trout-fishing ensnares him not. Roach and gudgeon have no charms for him, unless he catches a quantity to preserve in spirits of wine, to do duty as spinning baits on cold winter days when baits are not to be had. But when the hot harvest days are passed by, and as September wanes, as the nights grow colder, and even the midday air has a touch of keenness in it, then does the fever seize him, and henceforth during the autumn and winter there is no peace for him save at the waterside, with his trusty pike rod in his hand, and a prospect at least of having two or three good-sized pike to carry home.

And about the 15th of September he hath an opening day, and he goeth, not to a grand preserve, but to a small but pikey stream which floweth through the meadows. It is just to see that his rod and tackle are in order, and that he has not lost the knack of casting a bait. This is the record thereof.

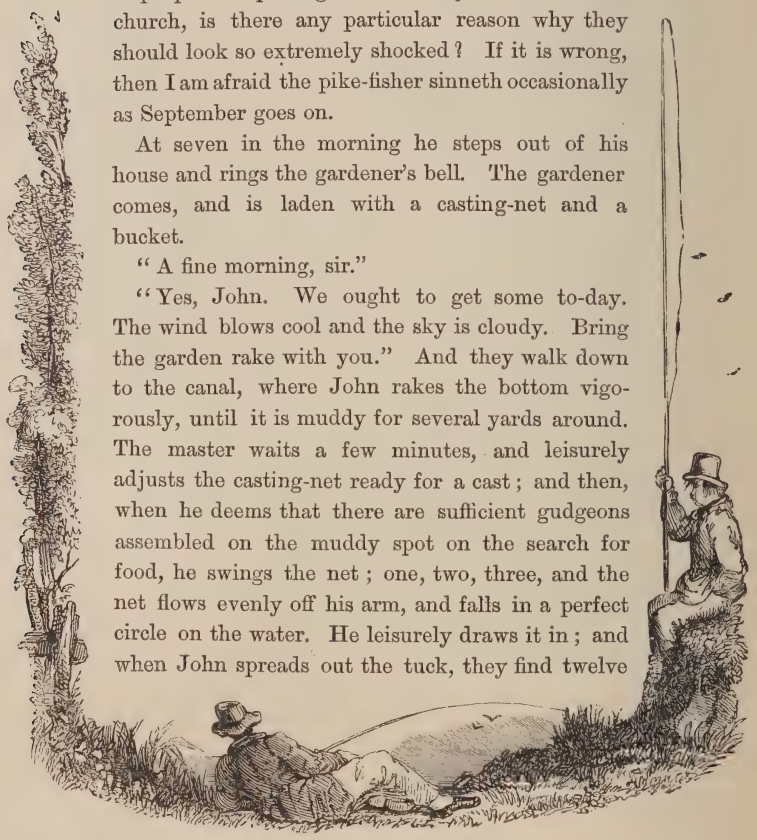
Is it any harm, I wonder, to look at one's rod on

a Sunday? There is such a temptation to do it. One sits in one's snuggery in the afternoon; a favourite rod lies on a bracket close by. Is it warped? one wonders, after its long rest. What more natural than to put it together; and if the study is not large enough for its length, to push it out of the window and try its spring? And if people are passing on their way from afternoon church, is there any particular reason why they should look so extremely shocked? If it is wrong, then I am afraid the pike-fisher sinneth occasionally as September goes on.

At seven in the morning he steps out of his house and rings the gardener's bell. The gardener comes, and is laden with a casting-net and a bucket.

"A fine morning, sir."

"Yes, John. We ought to get some to-day. The wind blows cool and the sky is cloudy. Bring the garden rake with you." And they walk down to the canal, where John rakes the bottom vigorously, until it is muddy for several yards around. The master waits a few minutes, and leisurely adjusts the casting-net ready for a cast; and then, when he deems that there are sufficient gudgeons assembled on the muddy spot on the search for food, he swings the net; one, two, three, and the net flows evenly off his arm, and falls in a perfect circle on the water. He leisurely draws it in; and when John spreads out the tuck, they find twelve

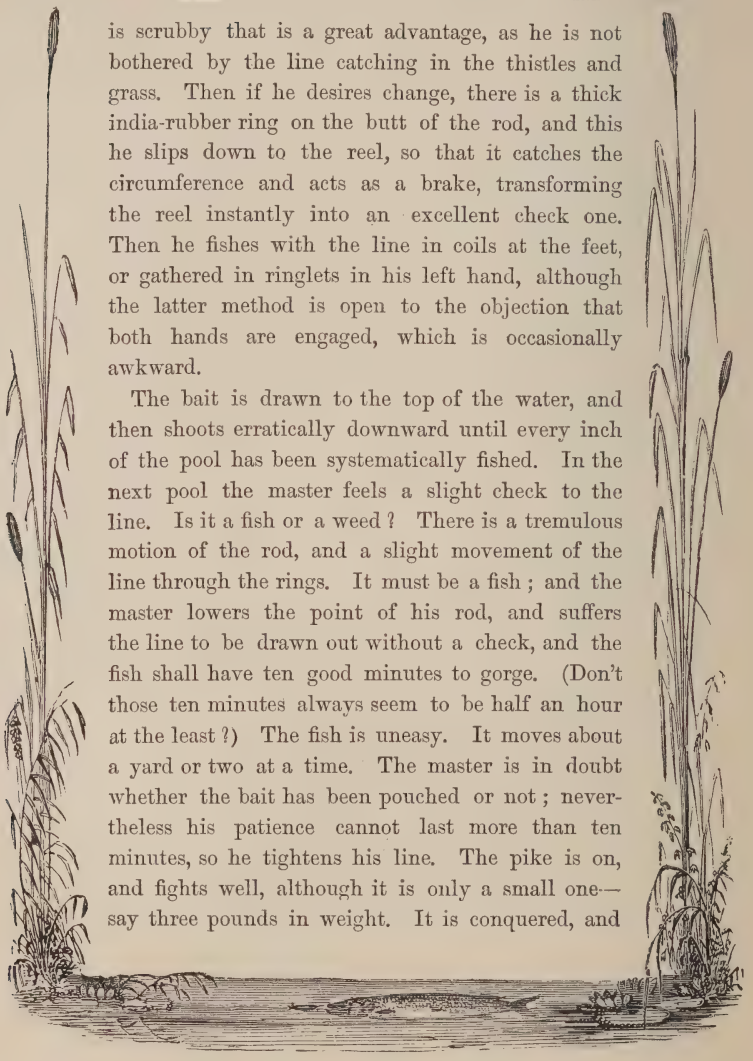


gudgeons and two roach in its folds. These are duly transferred to the bucket, as are also half a dozen gudgeons secured by a second cast. Then the master goes home to breakfast, while John kills the bait and wraps them in a cloth, rolling them up in the same manner as one sees a dentist's or surgeon's tools rolled up sometimes in a leather case, and so that only one bait at a time is exposed, when required, and they are kept from rubbing against each other.

About ten o'clock master and man are at the side of a small river which flows with sinuous course through rich meadows and yellow stubbles, forming here a long shallow, about a foot or two feet deep, with a smooth current sliding over waving weeds, and there a wide pool where the water moves very slowly in a large eddy, and washes lazily about the roots of tall flags and clumps of rushes.

He puts his rod together, and as the weeds are somewhat too thick as yet for comfortable spinning, he baits a gorge-hook and makes a cast from the reel, and the bait descends head-foremost into a deep pool close by a patch of lily leaves.

The master's tackle is somewhat peculiar, for he has his fancies, as all true anglers have. He has a Nottingham reel of a great diameter, and yet he has a dressed line such as is not used in the Nottingham style of fishing. The master says that even with a dressed line he can throw a long way off the reel if he so desires ; and where the ground



is scrubby that is a great advantage, as he is not bothered by the line catching in the thistles and grass. Then if he desires change, there is a thick india-rubber ring on the butt of the rod, and this he slips down to the reel, so that it catches the circumference and acts as a brake, transforming the reel instantly into an excellent check one. Then he fishes with the line in coils at the feet, or gathered in ringlets in his left hand, although the latter method is open to the objection that both hands are engaged, which is occasionally awkward.

The bait is drawn to the top of the water, and then shoots erratically downward until every inch of the pool has been systematically fished. In the next pool the master feels a slight check to the line. Is it a fish or a weed? There is a tremulous motion of the rod, and a slight movement of the line through the rings. It must be a fish; and the master lowers the point of his rod, and suffers the line to be drawn out without a check, and the fish shall have ten good minutes to gorge. (Don't those ten minutes always seem to be half an hour at the least?) The fish is uneasy. It moves about a yard or two at a time. The master is in doubt whether the bait has been pouched or not; nevertheless his patience cannot last more than ten minutes, so he tightens his line. The pike is on, and fights well, although it is only a small one—say three pounds in weight. It is conquered, and

is drawn in to the side, when—lo ! the bait comes out of the water with a jerk, and the pike is free.

"Ah, I thought that fellow had not pouched. He was simply holding on. The bait is not much torn, so here it goes on again. He will probably run at it again. Ah, there he is, and he has got it between his great jaws."

At the bottom of the pool, which is not very deep, you can see two small gleaming objects. They are the head and the tail of the gudgeon. Its middle part is in the pike's mouth ; and with those white specks as a starting-point you can trace the long body of the jack, which would otherwise be invisible. The master gives the jack ten more minutes, and still it has not swallowed the bait. He loses patience at this, and says,

"We cannot waste all the morning with this little fellow, John, so I will try and swing him out."

So he gently draws the pike down-stream, and within a foot of a low grassy bank, and then with a mighty heave he tries to jerk the fish out by the hold of its back-bent teeth upon the bait.

There is a sharp struggle on the top of the water, and the pike escapes.

The master smiles grimly as he proceeds to change his tackle to a spinning flight, for he will not be played with again.

Twenty yards lower down he has another run, and, striking hard, he finds that he has hooked



a fish of six or seven pounds, which gives him a decent amount of play before John lifts it out with the landing net.

So he goes on down the river, getting a run here and there as the day wears on, missing some and basketing some.

A cool west wind sweeps the first of the dying leaves off the trees, and carries to him the sound of his friends' shooting in the stubbles; the water-hens rustle in the reeds, and fly out with a great splutter; a weasel, following a rabbit, crosses his path, and when John shies a stone at it, coolly stops as if to ask, "What do you mean by that, you impertinent fellow?" and disturbed coveys of partridges whirr over his head. The sky is covered with opaline clouds, and long rays of misty sunshine stream down here and there. As he pushes through a coppice, he stops to gather a pocketful of nuts, and stains his fingers with the blackberries. Presently master and man sit down on a fallen tree, and eat their lunch with an excellent appetite.

When lunch and a pipe are finished, he puts on a fresh bait, and spins it across a likely pool. There is a swirl in the water, and as he strikes he feels that he has hooked a good fish. After a few minutes' play, it comes near to the surface, and, to his astonishment, full seven feet behind where the taut line is cutting the water, he sees its tail above the water. A pike seven feet long!—

impossible! Yet there is the head and there is the tail. Who shall say what visions cross his brain at that exulting moment! But a shaft of sunlight strikes the water, and renders it more transparent, and lo! the mystery is solved. There are two pike of equal size. One is hooked, and the other is following close in his wake as he swims about the pool,—whether from wonder, affection, concern, or the possible chance of a meal off a sick fish, one cannot say. Presently, however, he catches sight of John's extended net, and is off like a shot, while the hooked fish is landed, and promises to turn the scale at seven pounds.

And now they come to a little pool apart from the river, but communicating with it by a narrow channel. The pool is completely surrounded by a tall and thick rampart of reeds, over which it is certainly possible to cast, but which would effectually prevent the return of any spinning flight. It looks such a pikey place, however, that the master is determined to try it; so he puts on a gorge-bait, which can be forcibly dragged back through the reeds without much difficulty.

At the third throw the bait is seized with such a rush that the rod is nearly jerked out of the troller's hand.

"'That is a big fish, John.'

"It is, sir; but I think you will not get it out."

After a considerable time, and much careful play, the pike is tired out, and lies on its side at the



edge of the reeds, held there by main force. It must weigh ten pounds at the least. Not an inch further can it be dragged. John takes off his shoes and stockings, and attempts to wade to it; but as he plunges up to his waist in soft mud, and has to be helped out by his master, he is of no use in landing the pike. At last, fearful of straining his rod, the master takes hold of the line, and attempts to lead the fish through the reeds, fervently hoping that his tackle is sound and the hold of the hooks secure. Wallop! the gimp parts at the loop, and the pike sinks back into the pool.

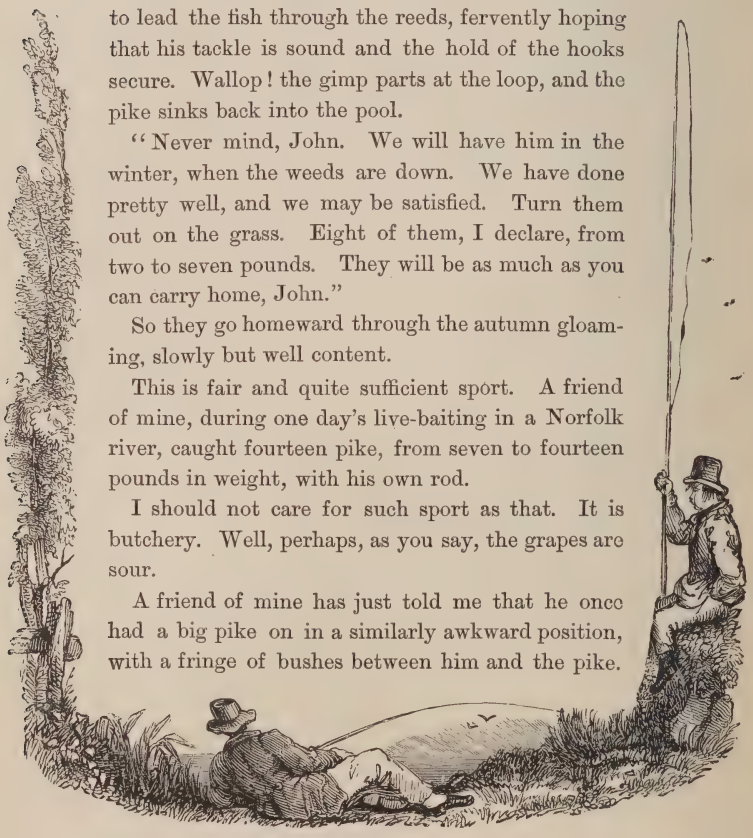
"Never mind, John. We will have him in the winter, when the weeds are down. We have done pretty well, and we may be satisfied. Turn them out on the grass. Eight of them, I declare, from two to seven pounds. They will be as much as you can carry home, John."

So they go homeward through the autumn gloaming, slowly but well content.

This is fair and quite sufficient sport. A friend of mine, during one day's live-baiting in a Norfolk river, caught fourteen pike, from seven to fourteen pounds in weight, with his own rod.

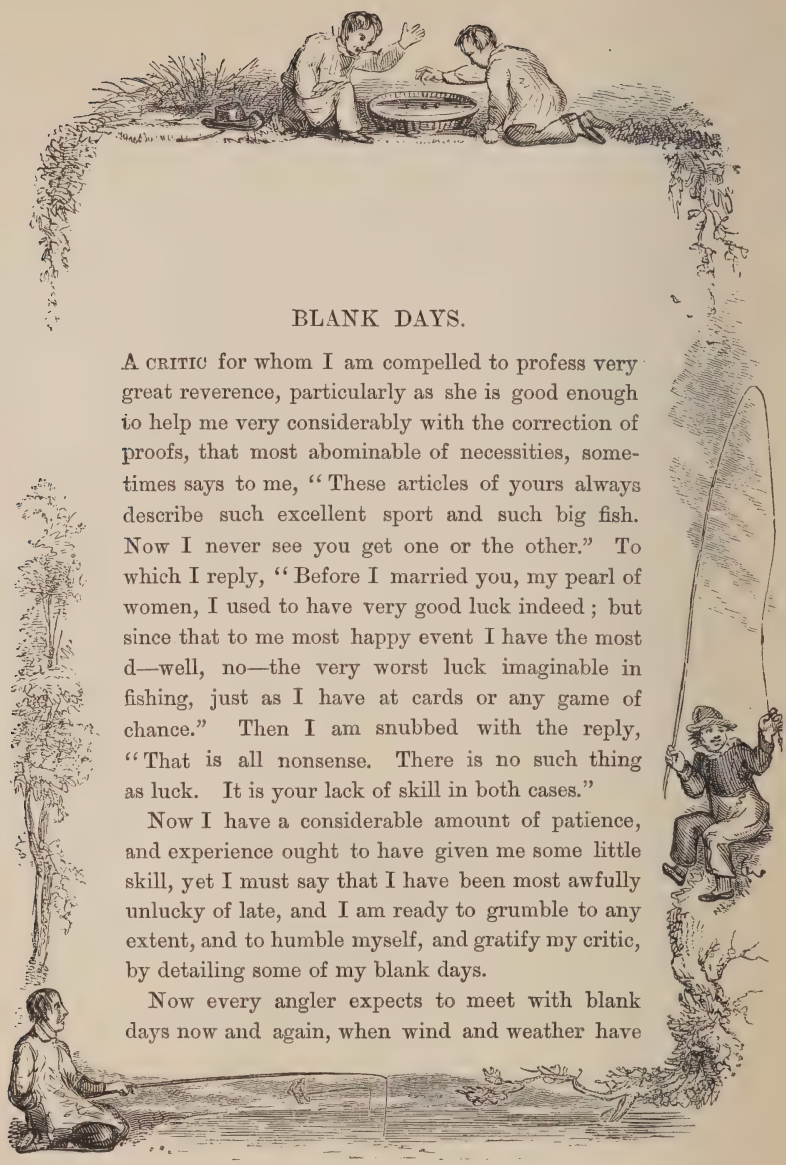
I should not care for such sport as that. It is butchery. Well, perhaps, as you say, the grapes are sour.

A friend of mine has just told me that he once had a big pike on in a similarly awkward position, with a fringe of bushes between him and the pike.



He tired it out, and then strung it up to a branch while he went and got a gun, and, crossing the river, shot the pike from the other side. It was a cute idea certainly, but rather rough on the pike, who had a right to complain of being taken in the flank in such a way.





BLANK DAYS.

A CRITIC for whom I am compelled to profess very great reverence, particularly as she is good enough to help me very considerably with the correction of proofs, that most abominable of necessities, sometimes says to me, "These articles of yours always describe such excellent sport and such big fish. Now I never see you get one or the other." To which I reply, "Before I married you, my pearl of women, I used to have very good luck indeed; but since that to me most happy event I have the most d—well, no—the very worst luck imaginable in fishing, just as I have at cards or any game of chance." Then I am snubbed with the reply, "That is all nonsense. There is no such thing as luck. It is your lack of skill in both cases."

Now I have a considerable amount of patience, and experience ought to have given me some little skill, yet I must say that I have been most awfully unlucky of late, and I am ready to grumble to any extent, and to humble myself, and gratify my critic, by detailing some of my blank days.

Now every angler expects to meet with blank days now and again, when wind and weather have

been against him; but I have had some fiendishly blank days of late; and if I struck the average between my expenses and the number of fish I have caught, the average cost of each fish would be something startling.

When 1877 just poked its nose into this wicked world, I went all the way to Shropshire from Northumberland, for two days' pike-fishing in the meres where formerly I had taken many a good fish. The first day we started for Colemere. It was a fine day, with a good breeze. We had plenty of lively young carp for bait, and we started in good time for a nine-miles drive. The first thing we found out was that our steed much preferred walking to trotting. He walked up the banks, and he walked down them, and he walked a long way along the levels to assure himself that they really were levels before he ventured to trot. Persuasion was of no use, and our whip broke. Then, in a sudden burst of activity, he smashed one of the traces, and we had to mend it with string. Then we lost our way in the endeavour to find the keeper's cottage; and, finally, it was midday ere we were afloat on the mere.

The keeper rowed us around, and we found that the pike were on the run. Before we were halfway round we had had five pike on, and lost them all,—in exactly the same way too. We struck hard, played each a considerable time, and then when it was drawn in sight we saw that its mouth was *shut*,

with the bait across it—a sure sign that it was not hooked. Then as the gaff was outstretched, it opened its mouth, gave a wriggle, and was off. The reader will say that we did not strike hard enough. Now I had a powerful rod and a strong line, and I struck as hard as I could—particularly after one or two misses. I struck and held on, quite regardless of the state of the tackle; but still it was no good. Those five fish escaped, and so did many more in exactly the same way. I was using Pennell's tackle; it was a suitable size for the baits; and the hooks were fairly sharp. In two hours we missed twelve fish, and then a small one was caught by my brother, and that without any striking at all, for his top had given. One fair-sized pike which my brother played for some time, and then lost, still followed the bait; and while I examined it to see if it had sustained damage, the pike came within a yard of the boat, waiting for the bait, with its eyes glaring and fins quivering. I tried to throw it to him, but the hooks caught in my sleeve, and after a vain attempt to free them, I seized the gaff and made a lunge at the pike, but missed him, and we saw him no more.

In desperation I tried live-bait, which I strongly object to, but the fish went suddenly off the feed, and we caught nothing.

The next day we went to Whitemere, and there it was the "same old game." We only caught two where we should have caught many more. I

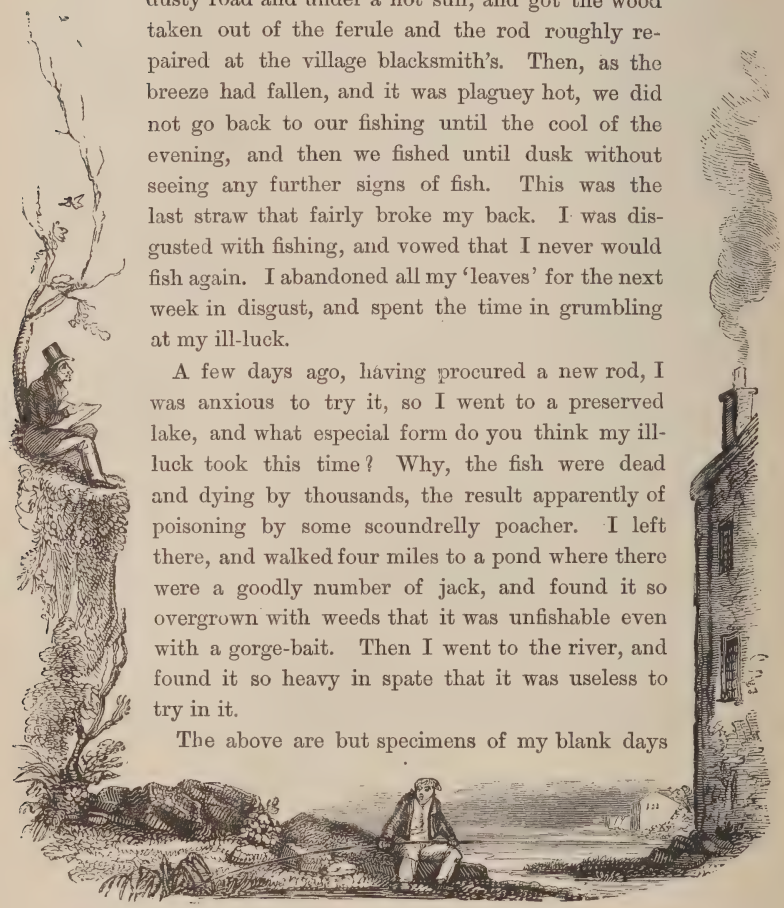
had only Pennell's tackle with me, but I made up my mind never to use it again.

Shortly after that, with a tackle of my own making, I killed three nice fish in a three-quarters of an hour's fishing which I snatched before it got dark; and believing in the efficacy of my tackle, I did not strike ruinously hard. The tackle I used is, I believe, not new, although I thought it was when I made it. It consists of a piece of copper wire with two triangles on one side, and one on the other, and a sliding lip-hook. The wire is thrust down under the bait, and the bending it to any desired curve gives the spinning. I was much taken with the idea of "one large flying triangle" at first, but I have come back to a greater number of smaller triangles, the hooks of which are kept very sharp.

Last summer I arranged for a fortnight's fishing for trout, carp, and pike, having leave for preserved waters for every day, with keepers in attendance to show the best spots, plenty of good bait, and apparently good weather. The first day we tried for pike, and caught none. Then we had a spell of trout-fishing, and caught very few. Then another day's pike-fishing, and caught none. Then we had a day's pike-fishing in a lake which was full of pike, and where I expected to catch at least twenty between the two of us. The keeper showed us the best water, and we spun, trolled, and live-baited all the morning, and saw but one fish, and that



made a rush at the bait when it was dangling close by the side of the boat, and with the rod in an upright position. Taken at such a disadvantage, the rod snapped just below the top ferule, and the pike got away. We walked two miles along a dusty road and under a hot sun, and got the wood taken out of the ferule and the rod roughly repaired at the village blacksmith's. Then, as the breeze had fallen, and it was plaguey hot, we did not go back to our fishing until the cool of the evening, and then we fished until dusk without seeing any further signs of fish. This was the last straw that fairly broke my back. I was disgusted with fishing, and vowed that I never would fish again. I abandoned all my 'leaves' for the next week in disgust, and spent the time in grumbling at my ill-luck.



A few days ago, having procured a new rod, I was anxious to try it, so I went to a preserved lake, and what especial form do you think my ill-luck took this time? Why, the fish were dead and dying by thousands, the result apparently of poisoning by some scoundrelly poacher. I left there, and walked four miles to a pond where there were a goodly number of jack, and found it so overgrown with weeds that it was unfishable even with a gorge-bait. Then I went to the river, and found it so heavy in spate that it was useless to try in it.

The above are but specimens of my blank days

this year. I am living in hope that the tide of luck will take a turn for the better.

A friend of mine met an angler the other day, and asked him,

"What sport?"

"Oh, splendid sport."

"How many have you caught?"

"Oh, I haven't caught any."

That fisherman was a philospher. Neither I nor any true angler would grumble at an occasional blank day; but when it comes to a continuous run of blank days, the angler is justified in tearing his hair, and asking himself the reason why he was born.



Yet "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and now and then come "red-letter days" which will bear describing and thinking over again and again, one of which will make up for many blank days. Perchance some still evening, when the sunset is dying in the west, and the placid river flows on monotonously, I shall catch the big fish which is ever in my dreams.

But whether I am successful or unsuccessful, shall maintain that there is no recreation like angling.



"Some youthful gallant here perhaps will say,
This is no pastime for a gentleman,
It were more fit at cards and dice to play,
To use both fence and dancing now and then,

Or walk the streets in nice and strange array.
Or with coy phrases court his mistris' fan;
A poor delight, with toyl and painfull watch,
With losse of time a silly fish to catch.

* * * *

Let them that list these pastimes then pursue,
And on their pleasing fancies feed their fill;
So I the fields and meadows green may view,
And by the rivers clear may walke at will,
Among the daisies and the violets blew,
Red hyacinth, and yellow daffodill,
Purple narcissus like the morning rayes,
Pale gandergras, and azure culverkayes.

I count it better pleasure to behold
The goodly compasse of the lofty skie,
And in the midst thereof, like burning gold,
The flaming chariot of the world's great eye;
The wat'ry clouds that in the ayre uprolled
With sundry kinds of painted colours flie;
And faire Aurora lifting up her head,
All blushing rise from old Tithonous' bed.

The lofty woods, the forrests wide and long,
Adorned with leaves and branches fresh and green,
In whose cool bow'rs the birds with chaunting song
Do welcome with their quire the Summer's Queen.

* * * *

All these, and many more, of His creation
That made the Heavens, the angler oft doth see;
And takes therein no little delectation
To think how strange and wonderfull they bee.

Framing thereof an inward contemplation,
To set his thoughts on other fancies free :
And whilst he looks on these with joyfull eye,
His mind is wrapt above the starry skie."

Thus singeth John Dennys, Esquire, in his "Secrets of Angling."

THE END.

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